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WATERS  
*of*  
CONTRADICTION



ANNA C.  
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# THE WATERS OF CONTRADICTION

BY

ANNA C. MINOGUE

AUTHOR OF

*"Cardoms," "Borrowed From the Night"*

NEW YORK

P. J. KENEDY & SONS

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TO  
THE PLAYMATE OF MY CHILDHOOD,  
THE COMPANION OF MY YOUTH,  
MY FRIEND, CONFIDANTE AND COUNSELLOR,  
MY SISTER TERESA,  
THIS BOOK IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED  
BY  
ANNA C. MINOGUE.





# WATERS OF CONTRADICTION

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## CHAPTER I

ONE of Lucy's earliest recollections was of the old log house in the hollow, where fat Aunt Jenny and her tall, thin spouse, Uncle Major, lived. Through the green vale a brook, coming she knew not whence, going she dreamed not whither, flowed; sometimes with mimic haste as if creation depended upon its reaching its destination at a certain hour, but oftener with such a leisure that, bending over it, Lucy wondered if it moved at all.

"Pet de chip basket I give yoh dis mawnin' on it, Lil'l Miss, an' find out foh yohse'f if de wattah ain't a-runnin'," said Uncle Major, who stood by her side, tall and gaunt in his blue military cloak; and she wondered why, when she refused to trust her wonderful gift to the brook, the old man should chuckle as if highly amused.

"I suppose it pleased him to think I am fond of

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the little basket he made for me. Negroes are certainly strange people," she communed, as she climbed the hill, beyond the crest of which was her own new home.

It was these low hills that had determined James Frazier in his choice of — County as his future home, for a Scotchman's love for the land he had never seen burned fervently in his breast. He had profited somewhat, with many another dweller in the North, by the war between the States in which he had taken no part; and hearing that good farms in Kentucky were being thrown upon the market, he had bade a glad farewell to the uncongenial life in a manufacturing town and hastened southward.

Fate, in the person of an Irish peddler, directed him to Stanton Hall, as the Kentucky descendant of an English gentleman had named his estate; and when his eyes were lifted to the hills, he knew he had reached the land of the heart's desire. He had not the means, even if he had the wish, to purchase the entire plantation, but the sad survivor of the fortunes of Stanton Hall was glad enough to accommodate him with an acreage suited to his purse.

She took the precaution, however, to locate him on a tract farthest removed from her dwelling, for,

while the money of the stranger was sorely needed, his presence was wholly undesired. The new landowner appeared to divine the feeling existing against him, which was shared, more or less, by the remnant of the old families in the neighborhood, and forebore thrusting himself upon their notice.. Possessed of a finer feeling than they credited him with, he appreciated the cause of their sentiment, and owning a larger philosophy, he left it to time to adjust their new relationship. He had what he longed for, a home among the hills, and he could afford to wait for other things.

On the tract which they had sold to him stood the foundation of Stanton Hall, a lowly log house built by the first adventurous bearer of the name, who had penetrated the frontier fast on the heels of Boone and his hardy companions. True to the trait of brute and human to take the way offering the least resistance to nature, he had planted his stakes in this spot of cleared land in the forest and the canebrakes, watered by the silvery stream. Greener than any grass his eyes had seen, familiar as they were with the fertile pastures of Virginia, was that which covered this narrow strip of land, the long, slender feet of a hill toward the north stretched out to

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separate her sister hills sloping back toward the east and west.

Why here there grew no cane, why here no towering oak tree reared its ancient form, he did not stop to question, for he was one of the unthinking men; but the few Indians who made friends with the pale-face intruders rather than leave the land they loved, seeing the new house, shook their heads and muttered strange words, which the negro servants whom the white man had dragged with him from their peaceful home in Virginia, hearing and not understanding, had interpreted as a warning or a curse.

On the green feet of the hill the first Kentucky Stanton built his log house and reared his family of manly sons and lovely daughters. If more misfortune and greater befel him than he was accustomed to seeing meted out to others in the country he had abandoned, he attributed it to the changed conditions of his life, and would have scoffed at the idea that any occult powers were directing natural calamities toward him in increased measure. His son, however, on coming into the paternal heritage, sought another location for the brick house he built at an expenditure that held him half his life in debt, and the old house was left in charge of the

negro who had helped his master to hew the logs and set them in their places. When he, too, started on the Lone Trail, one of his numerous descendants was assigned to the house, and the custom had obtained throughout the years, until the surrender of General Lee annihilated all the usages of the people.

But around their ruins sentiment lingered, and in the bitter years that followed none of the dwellers in Stanton Hall dreamed of ejecting Aunt Jenny, the lineal descendant of the Virginian negroes, from the old home, even though her husband had proven a traitor to his own by joining the Federal army.

With the sale of that portion of the plantation which included the log house between the hills, naturally both its tenants and hereditary owners expected changes to follow, and Mrs. Stanton, no less than Aunt Jenny, felt a pang as she anticipated the destruction of the home of the pioneers. But Mr. Frazier set the fears of the black woman at rest by assuring her that the home was hers while she should live. As soon as his back was turned she hobbled down the long white path which for generations had united the log house with the Hall, to convey the glad intelligence to her mistress.

"I am pleased to hear you will not be disturbed, Aunt Jenny," said Mrs. Stanton, concealing her surprise under the iciness that had stood her good service in these tragic days. "It is more than we had reason to expect from a Yankee."

Aunt Jenny has shared the general contempt, not to say hatred, entertained for the stranger, but one day, as Mr. Frazier was crossing the hollow on his way from the field beyond, he heard moans as of pain coming from the log house. To stop and inquire the cause was a natural prompting, and finding the old man sick with a severe cold, and Aunt Jenny in the throes of rheumatism, his next impulse was to hasten home and acquaint his wife with her condition.

His tale of human suffering sent that good lady on a mission of relief. It was the first time she had met the negroes, for, following the example of their former mistress, they had avoided her. She was well enough pleased that they had done so, since having a horror of war and regarding the negro as the cause of the terrible conflict which had staggered the civilized world, her antipathy toward the race was intense. But her humanity was far deeper, and, as she entered the low door and beheld the aged

pair alone and suffering, her eyes overflowed with tears and her voice throbbed with sympathy.

"Oh, you poor creatures!" she exclaimed, as she hastily put down her basket of food and medicine to replenish the slowly dying fire. Every day, for the weeks they remained ill, Mrs. Frazier visited them and ministered to them, as in former times their own mistress used to do; and when they were again well, it was difficult to say whether their gratitude to Mrs. Frazier or their love for Mrs. Stanton was greater.

Uncle Major professed there was no question of this nature in his mind to be answered, and the great kindness of the Yankee became a powerful weapon, henceforth, with which to combat his wife's bitter reproaches against him, because of his affiliation with the enemy of his people.

"She's shore a mighty good woman, Mis' Frazier is," admitted Aunt Jenny, as she hobbled around the floor, no longer bare and cold, for their generous new friend had covered it with a rag-carpet. "An' I ain't gwian to say nothin' gainst huh, though she is a Yank, nebah mo' while I lib. But I ain't gwian back on ole Mis'! Ole Mis' done keered foh me evah sense she cum to de Hall, an' she'd be'n



a-kerrin 'foh me yit, ef it warn't foh dem Yanks. 'Tain't huh fault dat it warn't she dat done foh us dis time, foh she doan come hyah no mo' since de—since Mistah Frazier bought de place. 'Tain't huh'rn no mo', an' ole Mis' nevah was one to go prowlin' through othah people's things. I ain't stractin' from Mis' Frazier's goodness, when I hole up foh ole Mis'. Mis' Frazier is a 'ception 'mong de Yanks, an' I ain't gwian back on my own people foh 'ceptions, like some folks dat I could name's done."

Naturally she closed the argument, for Uncle Major firmly subscribed to the truth expressed by the poet, that a man, and more especially a woman, convinced against his or her will, is of the same opinion still. When, however, through the untiring effort of Mr. Frazier, who, with his wife, had grown attached to the old couple, Uncle Major was granted a pension from the Government, which he had served by adding to its payroll if not to its defense, Aunt Jenny was effectually and forever silenced. The blue military cloak which she had only tolerated on her husband because she had nothing so warm with which to replace it, no longer aroused her ire; and she found herself listening, without indignation, to the stories of war-times, with which he was wont

to entertain the colored children who occasionally visited them.

"Well, sence yoh had to go 'gainst yoh own people an' fite foh de Yanks, I'se mighty glad dey's got honah 'nough to mek it up to yoh somehow," was all she said, for however greatly she might change in her mind, she was too shrewd a woman to admit it to him. Her opinion of his infidelity to his people had given her the whip-hand since he had rejoined her at the close of the war, a position that, hitherto, had not been hers. Now that he had acquired the fortune of eight dollars a month pension, she recognized that it was more important than ever that that position should be sacredly maintained.

"Yoh's got to tek 'em down a peg or two," she confided to a young niece, who repeatedly urged her to be less harsh with the old man. "Lor, chile! ef I war to let on dat I think he's done anything wondahful by gittin' dat money, dah'd be no standin' dat ole nigger. Fust thing you'd know he'd be buyin' hisse'f watches an' rings an' sech like foolishness. Now he gibbs me evah cent of de money when it comes, tryin' to mek up foh de feelin' I have in me dat he done bring disgrace on de fambly by fi'tin' wif de Yanks. 'An' he did, chile, he did!

“Lor! if ole Marse war libin’ he’d a-shot Majoh de fust sight hed k’otched of him. I lubed my ole Marse nex’ best to my ole Mis’, an’ I lub my ole man bettaher’n bofe of ’em. So you ondahstan’ sence I knowed how he’d took de disgrace Majoh brung on de fambly, I war mighty glad ole Marse war dead’ foh de war broke out. Lor’, chile! many a long night I lay awake, thinkin’ what ’ud a-be-come of my ole man, if Marse war a-libin’ when he jined wif de Lincum men.

“Marse always seemed to have a s’picion ’gainst Majoh dat he warn’t quite right, an’ when I tole Marse we war gwian to git married, he said I’d done bettah an’ took some of de othah boys dan him. But Lor’! I hadn’t any idy what Marse meant tell Majoh lit off wif de bluecoats an’ lef’ me hyah, all by myse’f. An’ yit, honey I don’t know if he war to blame so much, as de Injuns. Mebbe if we hadn’t be’n a-libin’ in dis house, it wouldn’t a-happened.”

“What’s de house got to do wif Uncle Majoh turnin’ Yank, Aunt Jenny?” asked the girl; but Aunt Jenny’s mouth closed like a steel trap, and her curious relative saw that the secret, if secret there were, was safe behind those set lips.

Next to the money which they had been the means of securing for the old negro couple, the greatest blessing the coming of the Fraziers had brought them, was the occasional presence of Lucy, their daughter and only child. "Lil'l Miss" they called her, and a love, surpassing even that they had bestowed upon the children of their mistress, they lavished upon her. Like a ray of sunshine in an old forest, she flitted into the log house many times during the week, for Mrs. Frazier had come to look upon the negroes as her special charge. Too old to be of any assistance to her in the house, Aunt Jenny still retained her ability to turn out fine laundry work, and having noticed the desire for independence in the old woman, Mrs. Frazier regularly sent her such articles of wearing apparel and household linen as required especial pains in making up. And Lucy's work it was to fetch these home every Saturday evening. Often in the after years, when the low voice was stilled by the dust of death, Lucy seemed again to hear her mother calling to her in the playhouse under the cherry tree:

"Come, Lucy! It is time to go down to Aunt Jenny's for the things."

Not a very willing little girl always responded

to the command, for it meant, besides leaving the unfinished play, the washing of hands and face, the combing of hair, and the donning of a white apron of which she must take care.

"I don't see, mother, why I must dress up just to go down to Aunt Jenny's," she complained, as she submitted to the operation one summer day. "She is only a *nigger*."

"A' negro you mean, Lucy," corrected her mother, who had been taken from the school-room to become Mr. Frazier's wife.

"But she calls herself a *nigger*, mother," persisted the child.

"But that is no reason why you should do likewise, and only impolite little children call people names," said the mother. "And though she is a negro, as you say, she is a nice old woman, and as such you owe her the respect of appearing before her neatly dressed and cleanly. And besides all this, my child, she loves you, and I want my little girl early to realize that the very best gift of God is love. Say that the hand that offers you this priceless treasure is black, shall you despise the gift because of the color of the giver? Do not do that ever, Lucy! Mother is older than you, and the

years have taught her much that you have yet to learn, that you must learn for yourself. There is one thing she knows that you can take from her without waiting for time to teach you; and that thing, Lucy, is this: we never can tell where we shall need the friendship which, in our pride or self-sufficiency, we discarded. Life is all before you, dear, and it may be that that old man and woman, poor though they be and of an inferior race, may one day prove the only friends who could serve you at that particular time."

Lucy's mother rarely spoke to her so solemnly, and she opened her blue eyes in astonishment. It gave such a preternaturally wise look to the little face, that Mrs. Frazier laughed, the while she set a kiss on each suddenly drooped eyelid.

## CHAPTER II

"LIL'L Miss" was inspired by none of the motives that actuated her parents in their relations with their neighbors. With the pure democracy of childhood she mingled among them as freely as she had been accustomed to doing with the children of the little Eastern town, and promptly characterized as snobs all who resented her friendliness.

Everything considered, a district school is the most complete social leveler we possess. Often a stranger to them, and usually sent into the profession by the necessity of earning a livelihood or by a wish to escape the drudgery that falls to the lot of the daughter of the small farmer, the teacher recognizes no distinction among her pupils; and favoritism, when it exists, is generally shown to the best scholar and not to the child of the most influential parents.

For several terms the little frame school that stood on the slope overlooking the white road, in which Lucy was destined to begin the weaving of

the web of her destiny, as well as make her short flights toward the mount of knowledge, had been taught by one of the daughters of the people. A descendant of the pioneers, a conscience, inherited from some Puritan ancestor, had in the Kentucky branch of the family, expressed itself in an utter abhorrence for the possession of human beings as property; and in consequence, while his companions on the frontier laid the foundation of future wealth and greatness for their prosperity, the Austins fought the long dull fight against poverty, and worn out before their time by the conflict, left it to be continued by their children.

However other members of the family, past, present and to come, might regard this principle and its effects on their material position, Miss Cora gloried in it. More to her than the blue blood of the Cavaliers or the wealth of the commercial prince, was this precious inheritance of an early recognition on the part of her ancestors of what she had been permitted to see declared a grievous wrong against God and humanity.

Murmuring, doubtless, she had often heard among her people against this action of their fathers in refusing to grasp opportunities as they presented



themselves, because of a straightlaced notion. Customs were laws, declared these malcontents in the little company of the righteous, and laws were right. And such was their perversity, when the stability of those laws was to be decided by the sword, many of her kindred, her only brother included, had not hesitated to line themselves up on the defense.

Miss Cora confidently expected some dire punishment would befall them because of their betrayal of inherited principle, but singularly enough not one of them was missing when the army of the Lost Cause was dissolved, although each had fought gallantly throughout the long campaign. Had they been slain or wounded, she would have seen in it the dispensing hand of justice; their safety she attributed to a desire on the part of the justice they had outraged to vindicate herself. She would show these repudiators of a holy heritage that it carried with it material as well as moral value, and while the possessions of the ungodly would melt away, that of the just would increase. And Miss Cora regarded herself as the especially chosen instrument of this justice to bring about this vindication.

The cessation of hostilities found her at the beginning of young womanhood, and equipped by

nature and study for the work she felt had been allotted unto her. While her brother had been fighting against her conviction, she had been managing the little business in the village, which had been bequeathed to the two children by their father and a bachelor uncle. On account of her Confederate brother and cousins, it had suffered severely from the depredations of the Federal soldiers; but Miss Cora had always been able to retrieve her fortune after each cruel visitation. When her brother returned she placed it in his hands in a better condition than it was when he had thrust it upon her, to ride off with Morgan and his gallant men to join the Confederate forces at Bowling Green.

As may be supposed, the avocation of the dispenser of staple groceries in a town the size of Beechwood at that period left ample time for any aside one might care to engage in. Miss Cora, recognizing the possibility of the return of her brother, and foreseeing, in such an event, the relegation of the business into his hands, deeply considered her future position. She might, of course, remain with him as superintendent of his home, but being aware that a rather pretty neighboring girl was looking with shy eyes upon that place, Miss

Cora realized that the time would come when she would be called upon to relinquish that also.

Moreover, her taste of personal freedom seemed to render it impossible for her to accept a place of dependence, and she determined to prevent the possibility of this being forced upon her by necessity or her own short-comings. Not many openings presented themselves for these worthy pioneers of the New Woman movement. The one that appeared most desirable to Miss Cora was that of teaching, and immediately she began to supplement her slight store of knowledge by a course of study, which was gradually enlarged until it embraced branches known only by name to many of the country's most successful teachers.

The year after the war beheld Miss Cora installed as teacher in one of the less important district schools, for trustees were averse to bestowing the pitiful public funds, then paid to instructors, upon one, who, they remembered, had no experience, and they doubted if much knowledge. Miss Cora quelled her feelings, and took up her work with the zeal of the enthusiast. She had a double stimulant now to inspire it, and ere long she began to be heard of beyond the limits of her district.

The Superintendent, in his report, found Miss Cora's the most perfectly disciplined school in the county, while the little backwoods pupils would have held their own with the pupils of the town school, he asserted. As, however, he had no jurisdiction over the latter, and was consequently not in a position to judge of the merits of its students, his second tribute to the young teacher did not carry much weight. The cynical remembered that Miss Cora was a comely girl and the Superintendent a young man in the impressionable period of life, and did not hesitate to affirm that admiration for the woman had assisted in dictating his report concerning the teacher.

Gossip travels rapidly in small communities, and Cora's brother laughingly regaled her with the comments of the cynics, when the next Friday night found her under his roof. The warm blood swept up to her pale intellectual brow, but beyond this expression of displeasure, he received no answer. For long days, however, the words rankled in Miss Cora's breast, causing her, when next she met him, to treat the Superintendent with such coldness, that his admiration, which needed only time and encouragement to develop into a deeper feeling, froze at

its source, while Miss Cora repeated her vow to convince the people interested in education of her superior talents.

This was not difficult to do, as she would have realized had she permitted herself to mingle more freely with the teachers, for, with all its other institutions, education in the South suffered sorely in the years immediately following the Great Division. The fund was insufficient and had to be increased by the parents of the pupils, and, as these were badly crippled in fortune, when not reduced to poverty, little private aid could be given, and, as the schools were open only a few months of the year, men and women of superior qualifications were not often counted among the teachers.

The salary she received, small as it was, was scrupulously saved by Miss Cora, and the fund was steadily increased by teaching private schools during the long vacations public necessity afforded her. Her living expenses were provided for by her brother, who generously recognized the great work she had accomplished in protecting their interests during his absence. Even when, as it befel in the course of time, he placed the shy girl in his home as his wife, Cora suffered nothing by the change in his

domestic affairs. Rather did she gain in importance, when her first carefully hoarded five hundred dollars were invested in a good town house which its owner had sacrificed, in order to join the great Western Exodus. A pair of sturdy boys and a fair-haired girl now called the energetic teacher Aunt, and in the three children Miss Cora appeared to sink all her personality. They would be wealthy, she told herself, by their father's efforts and hers. When they were grown, the changes that time brings, would afford them great opportunities to increase that wealth; and while the children of the slave-holders would be working for their daily bread, the children of the men who had preferred poverty and shame and repudiation for the sake of a holy principle, would hold the places of prominence in the community. Verily it were worth any sacrifice to bring about this supreme triumph of justice, to vindicate the truth that had inspired those brave old pioneers.

Such was the woman who presided over the little school house, standing, it might be said, almost in the shadow of Stanton Hall. When the son of the first Stanton had built his new brick house among the oaks that stood well back from the waters of

Dalton Run, he held counsel with his two neighbors, and at a point where the three plantations joined, they cut off a triangular piece of land, which they devoted to educational purposes, and erected a small frame building for a school.

It was the second school built in the country, and, while it was for many years attended only by the children of the three planters, in time, the plantations being divided and again sub-divided and many of the sub-divisions sold, the school lost its private character and was finally appropriated entirely for public purposes. But being the foundation of their ancestors, the Stantons always took a deeper interest in the school than any one else in the neighborhood, and, until now, when the Hall had no longer a master, a Stanton was always one of the trustees. They took a pardonable pride in the school, and it not infrequently happened that applications were received from other districts, such was the fame for efficiency it had acquired. Hence, the highest ambition of the county teachers was to secure the Stanton school.

For several years the position had been held by a young man, who carried a Normal school certificate neatly framed in his trunk. It was an open

secret that the trustees of the town school had sought to secure his services, but, true to the tradition of his fathers to maintain the high standing of the school at any cost, the soldier head of Stanton Hall, who had returned at the close of the war dying from a disease contracted by its privations and exposures, had made up the difference in the salaries out of his own depleted purse, that the school might not lose the services of the skilled instructor.

The teacher, however, had sought a wider and more remunerative field for his talents, and again the duty devolved upon the sick man of securing a successor. Rumor had been busy with the name of Cora Austin. From the little school in the corner of the country, she had steadily advanced to better paying and more centrally located ones, and everywhere praise of her discipline and ability was recorded. Sorely against his mother's will, Captain Stanton attended the Teachers' Institute day after day to satisfy himself that, should he engage the young woman, he would make no mistake.

"I know, mother," he would say, "that I am exhausting my small stock of vitality, but it is for a good cause. It is the last teacher I shall select for



Stanton school, the last, for aught I know, that any Stanton shall select, for I fear we shall not be able to hold the Hall until Arthur is grown. In view of all this, it must be that the last teacher we have placed in the school we built, shall be worthy of us and its well-won reputation. The institute will last only two more days, and for both of them, Miss Austin has been assigned special work. So far she has shown great thoroughness in her methods of ordinary teaching. I am anxious now to see how she approaches the special studies."

"It would not be a bad choice," observed his mother. "Her brother and cousins were in our army."

"Not as we were, however," he answered. "The Austins opposed us in theory and practice, since the beginning of the Commonwealth. And more than any of them, Miss Cora Austin. But she is a gentlewoman. The feelings of our children will never suffer under her, and neither will the feelings of the Yankees, who are swarming in upon us. And this is right.. The ideal instructor is the one broad enough to recognize the right of each individual to his opinion and belief, just enough to give him opportunity to express and uphold them, and great

enough to refrain by action, open or hidden, from engrafting his own opinion and belief upon the mind of the student. All this, I am inclined to think, Miss Cora is."

He attended the two meetings, engaged the girl for the ensuing term, but before it began, the gallant Captain and last master of Stanton Hall, had been laid to sleep with his fathers in the family graveyard on the hill. Miss Cora fulfilled the expectations of her patron, and because of this and the fact that Captain Stanton had engaged her, she had been constantly reappointed.

It was in the middle of her third term, when, their new home ready, the Fraziers moved from the town. School was in progress that October morning, when Miss Cora's attention was drawn from her class in Second Arithmetic by the opening of the door. She turned and saw a white-aproned little figure standing in the aisle, a satchel on one arm and a dinner basket on the other.

"It's the Yankee girl," whispered Sylva Dalton to Jasper Long, but loud enough for Arthur Stanton to hear.

The hate of the name which was born with him, for the day that Captain Stanton knew he had an

heir was also the one on which he learned of Lee's surrender, leaped up in a red flame into his eyes, and, with it still kindling them, he looked upon the little stranger now advancing at the teacher's invitation.

"What is your name?" asked Miss Cora, wondering whence her new pupil had come.

"Lucy Frazier," replied she, and somehow the listening children caught a defiant note in the bell-like voice, while it seemed she swept them with an angry light in her blue eyes; for she had felt the hatred of the one, and flung back her scorn of it upon the many.

"Oh, yes!" said Miss Cora, remembering the new house. "Hang your bonnet and basket on that hook, Lucy, and take this seat. I shall examine you when I have finished this class."

With deliberation and supreme indifference, knowing the gaze of all was upon her, Lucy followed the instructions of the teacher, and, going to the place assigned to her, opened her spelling-book, and affected to be deeply engrossed in the study of the formidable column of words; but between her eyes and the letters she seemed to see two other pairs of eyes, one blue and flashing like her own, the other soft and dark and tender.

"He is mean, I know it," she thought of the blue-eyed boy, and then surreptitiously glancing over the top of the book and meeting the dreamy brown eyes of Jasper Long, the sense of a relief having been brought into the situation made itself felt in her anxious little heart.

The examination of Lucy did not consume much time. Education was not such an elaborate affair in those days. A feeling akin to dismay ran over the room when the teacher announced that Lucy would go into the big spelling-class, for that branch of study was held in commendable esteem in Stanton school, and proficiency in it gave one rank among the pupils.

"It isn't fair! She is only in Second Arithmetic, the same as us," whispered Sylva to Jasper. "It will make Arthur angry."

"What's it to Arthur?" asked Jasper, busying himself with the pages of the Arithmetic which was the trial of his young life.

"Because he's there, too," she explained. "And if ever the Yankee were to turn him down—Oh!"

"What would happen?" he asked, fixing his wondering eyes on her vivacious little face.

"Jasper, are you talking?" asked Miss Cora, in her authoritative voice.

“Yes, ma’am,” confessed he.

“Then take your spelling-book and stand on the floor,” commanded Miss Cora, and, as he obeyed, and Lucy’s lifted gaze beheld the boy with the soft dark eyes, the swift sympathy that rose in her breast sent its message across the room to him, before the unrelaxed voice of the teacher drew her attention to her own affairs.

### CHAPTER III

MISS CORA was a constant student, but not all her lessons were learned in books. She studied human nature in the making in the children committed to her care, and the playground was her favorite place of observation. Standing in the doorway, her graceful, well-poised figure leaning against the sill, it was her custom to watch them as they played, or walked up and down the white road which ran past the school house, edged by its low, cool stone walls.

Two of the older girls were now sauntering along its white way, with arms around each others waists and the teacher's eyes followed them somewhat regretfully. They were the feminine David and Jonathan of the school, and their friendship, which had stood the test of many a term, was now threatened with interruption, for one, whose wavy hair fell in a golden shower down her back, was to leave, in a few months, with her family for the West.

"I wish Emma were not going away," repeatedly thought Miss Cora, gazing after the pair. "I do not know what Carry will do without her next year. But perhaps she will not come back. That would be a pity. I should like to see her finish her botany and algebra at least."

Her gaze wandered from the road to a knoll overlooking the playground, and a little frown showed on her tranquil brow.

"Annabelle is at it again!" she thought, her eyes resting on a girl of sixteen years of age, seated on the grass with several boys, some two or three years older, gathered around her. Beside her, her head resting against Annabelle's shoulder, was a little girl, with long brown curls framing a delicately beautiful face.

"She is spoiling Milly," mentally commented the young teacher, "as well as interfering with the boys' studies. It isn't her fault, of course, that they like her, but the child would not approach her without her invitation. I do not see why Annabelle finds making a pet of one of the little girls essential to her happiness. Last year it was Sylva, and it nearly broke her heart when she found herself set aside for another—and such another!"

For Milly was a puzzle to the mistress of Stanton School, and her perplexity was shared in lesser degree by her pupils. Her parents—or the man and woman who called themselves such—had drifted into the locality, with their few belongings piled in a wagon drawn by a pair of skinny horses. The condition of the vehicle and the animals told of a long journey, and when the man spoke of the West Virginia mountains and the home he had lost through the revenge of certain neighbors, his story was not discredited.

Sorely in need of some one to cultivate her land, Mrs. Stanton offered the stranger and his family one of the abandoned negro cabins. Gladdened by the prospect of a home and employment, the stranger unpacked his wagon and entered upon his new duties. He appeared a man beaten by adversity, and something of a fellow-feeling prompted Mrs. Stanton to give him every opportunity her slender means permitted. But disaster seemed to dog his footsteps, and for every gain there straightway appeared a corresponding loss, until even in a locality overshadowed by misfortune he was marked as a victim of adversity. There was, however, about the silent man a stolid determination not to



be defeated, and after every blow they saw him once more struggling to regain his feet.

Besides Milly he had two other children, a boy and a girl, both older and both bearing so strong a resemblance to their parents, and so totally unlike the delicately-featured youngest child, that, in the minds of others than Miss Cora, there existed a doubt of her parentage. The two older children of the West Virginian were noticeable in the school for their unkempt and neglected appearance, while Milly, though no better clad, was always clean and neat. This evidence of partiality on the mother's part made Miss Cora the kinder to the other two, but later she learned it was entirely due to Milly's own persistence that she came to school with a well-washed face and mended frocks.

"Milly's that particular," complained her sister in her hour's confidence with the teacher, "that she's bothersome. Why, Miss Cora, she'll go out and gather sycamore leaves and turn 'em wrong side up and set her plate on 'em, pretending they're a tablecloth, when she eats her dinner. And she just makes Mammy wash every stitch of her clothes on Saturday and starch 'em up good and stiff and iron 'em on Sunday, so's she can have 'em nice and

clean for Monday to come to school in. And she makes me wash her face every morning and curl her hair and then she goes to the looking-glass Mis' Stanton gave Mammy, and if she finds I haven't done it just so, she'll holler and cry and Mammy'll make me do it all over again to hush her up. She's a whole lot of trouble to us all, but Mummy says it isn't going to hurt us to humor her a little. She thinks maybe she'll grow out of being finicky after a while."

Miss Cora thereupon began to inculcate the gospel of neatness to this pupil, but she found it was time wasted. The older sister was well satisfied with her condition, and a change would have been as undesirable as were Milly's notions. The sketch given of the little girl's instinctive reaching out for the better things of life, appealed to Miss Cora, as it afterward appealed to Annabelle, who had not hesitated to drop her pet of the former year and give her place to the child of the poor stranger.

"I can't help it, Miss Cora," declared the candid girl, when the teacher expostulated with her for her partiality, which was the cause of much jealousy among the smaller children. "She is such a pretty child and she does so love pretty things. Why, I

gave her a piece of ribbon the other day and she actually cried. I wrote Mamma about her, and she told me I might bring Milly home with me some Friday."

"I do not think you ought to do that, Annabelle," said Miss Cora. "It will only make her own home that much more distasteful when she comes back."

"But I've already asked her," said Annabelle, who lived in the adjoining county and was stopping with a relative in order to attend Miss Cora's school. "The visit will bring something into her life and give her something to think about."

"That is why I object," observed Miss Cora. "She will think too much about it. She may grow unhappy."

"Oh, I don't think so," said Annabelle, with the assurance of sixteen. "She is a sensible little thing. When her sister and brother get angry and fight because the others taunt them with their poverty and call them names, Milly just laughs. She says she cannot help it that her father is poor. God made him so. I couldn't be that sensible, if I tried," and the laugh that made people love Annabelle rippled after the words.

"Still, Annabelle, I wish you would not make so

much over her," enjoined Miss Cora. "You keep her with you during recreation, when she should be playing, just as you keep Dick and Paul and Eddie. It isn't—healthy," finished Miss Cora, finding no other word ready under the wicked little light that flashed into the girl's eyes, before they were hidden by the quickly lowered lids. The interview over, Annabelle turned away, pitying poor Miss Cora, who had no little girls and big boys to love her more than making mud pies or playing ball.

"Miss Cora says you must play with the other little children, Milly, and not hang around me," said the virtuous Annabelle, as, dismissed for the noon lunch and recreation the day following the interview, the little army filed out of the low door. Milly's face grew sad and the tears sprang into the liquid brown eyes, but she made no protest. "And Miss Cora says you and Paul and Eddie must do likewise," she observed demurely to Dick Johnson.

"Well, let's play 'King-king-cat-a-go,'" said the ready Dick. "She has no objection to our playing together, has she?"

"No, but I have," pouted Annabelle, walking majestically to her favorite seat on the green knoll, while the other members of the larger class secretly

wondered if she and the boys had quarrelled and as secretly hoped their surmise were correct. There she sat in solitary splendor while the boys moped and Milly vainly tried to obey the teacher's decree. For two days the miserable situation lasted, but when Friday dawned and Dick remembered that the evening would send his boyish love to her distant home, he threw obedience to the wind, and boldly approached the green throne on which Annabelle sat, with a book of poems she pretended to be reading.

His example was speedily followed by his two rivals, and when Milly's never long-distracted eyes sought her patron, and beheld the return of her fellow-worshippers, she abandoned her half-finished playhouse and hastened to her old place by the queen's side.

"It must be affinity on the part of the child," observed Miss Cora, "and simple human nature with the boys; and against both a teacher's advice is powerless. It would be better if the boys were at college, but their parents cannot afford that now, and so I shall have to do the best I can for them. If Dick could only get Annabelle out of his thoughts, there is nothing he could not do in the way of study,

I fear I have here a foreshadowing of his life. He will always be led by the heart, and the head is a far better guide," concluded the young philosopher.

Her musing was interrupted by a familiar sound from the playground, where a number of the other pupils were engaged in a game of Prisoner's Base. In the center of the well-worn plot stood Lucy Frazier, her blue sunbonnet hanging down her back, her face flushed and her eyes flashing. Every gaze was fixed on her, and it seemed to the watching teacher as if the very rays of the sun were all focused on the defiant, angry child, as she hurled her words of scorn at her opponents, who evidently had sought to deprive her of her victory in the game.

Miss Cora, swiftly reviewing the past, realized in that moment that ever since the coming of Lucy the tranquility of the playground had been more frequently and sometimes tragically interrupted, while in the school-room a feeling of antagonism had sprung up and was developing a strength which, at times, alarmed her. She could not say when it had come into existence, but she had no difficulty in recalling its first appearance.

Whether she knew instinctively Arthur Stanton's

weakness, or whether her liking for words was natural and must develop itself, from the time she entered the spelling-class at Stanton School, Lucy was predominated by the desire to excel the others in that particular study. When she lifted her little face from the foot of the class, which place, as the latest comer, had been assigned to her, and saw Annabelle and Dick, Emma and Carry, the other older boys and girls as well as several of her own age standing before her, she experienced a strange sinking of heart, hitherto unknown in her childish experience. Suppose she should never get past the foot? And what more likely with all those learned boys and girls ahead of her? But when, after the first recitation, she found she had changed places with the boy above her, her spirits shook off their heaviness. It speedily returned, however, when Sylva, with petty spitefulness, told her she had only turned down Eddie Ware, who had never received a headmark in his life.

Bravely Lucy took her place above Eddie Ware the next morning, and when as the days passed, they saw her coming steadily up the line, the ones in the upper part of the class began to observe the new little girl. Spelling, however, was only a division

of their studies, and they did not give it the absorbing attention of Lucy. There was one exception, however, Arthur Stanton. There was an old tradition in the school that the Stantons had been its best students, especially excelling in spelling, and now that so little else of their past belonged to them, there was a passionate desire in the heart of the boy to preserve their reputation as scholars.

With a diligence that was pathetic, he had striven to succeed in his studies, and when he was promoted this term to the higher spelling class, his feet went swiftly over the homeward path to acquaint his grandmother with the fact. So it was with a feeling akin to dismay that he beheld the admission of the little Yankee and watched her steady advance toward his place near the head of the class, which he had maintained by the most arduous study. A sense of approaching defeat at her hands took possession of him, and thought of such a catastrophe threw him into a frenzy of anger. He plunged into the study with a feverish interest, and its result sent him steadily forward until he stood at the head of the class. As steadily the detested little girl gained on him, until the conclusion of the lesson one day saw her standing next to him.



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With dull, sickening throbs of heart and a face ashy pale, he approached the ordeal the next morning. Lucy took her position with certainty showing in her flashing blue eyes. Seeing this, he realized that she knew his deadly fear, and was even then rejoicing in the anticipation of her triumph. The reflection intensified his hatred of her. When such intense feeling exists, it is impossible that the atmosphere shall not be disturbed by it, and every child in the room, down to Milly, patiently spelling her way through the lesson in her first reader, felt that something unusual was about to happen.

Five times Miss Cora's eyes had been turned upon him, as she gave him a word, and five times Lucy had waited, with shining eyes and flushed face, for one cruel little letter to escape and swing open the door of her victory; and five times, with a deep breath of relief, Arthur saw her disappointed. Then fell the sixth word from the lips of the unsuspecting teacher. A simple word enough, and when her "Next!" followed his spelling of it, the cold sweat broke on his ashen brow.

"Correct, Lucy! Go up head!" said Miss Cora, smiling at the little girl; when Arthur, with the muttered exclamation, "I'll never stand next below

a Yankee!" drew her attention to him, as he deliberately walked to the foot of the class.

Miss Cora read the meaning of it all in a moment, but being a gentlewoman as well as a wise teacher, she made no comment on the action and continued the lesson. From that day, with a pride that was as sad as his diligence had been pathetic, Arthur made no effort to succeed in spelling. He began then systematically to lessen Lucy's triumph, by demoralizing the class, and, as he had his sympathizers, some actuated by his own sentiments, others by indolence, he so well succeeded that even Eddie Ware would have had no difficulty in holding Lucy's place, had he made sufficient effort to try.

At first Miss Cora was puzzled over the deterioration of her spelling class, and when the explanation dawned upon her mind, she was, at first, at a loss how to deal with her refractory pupils. Finally she announced her intention of dividing the class, leaving Arthur and his political sympathizers together, while Lucy and the remainder constituted the second division. Immediately the interest of the boy and his friends was renewed. With the intuition which was singularly well developed in her, Lucy grasped the meaning of the division, and, as the

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teacher vouchsafed no explanation, she was included in the scorn which the child entertained for her companions. It was not her idea of the way in which defeat should be met; but she resolved her class should not fall behind even though she had the stragglers to captain.

“They want to beat us, and Miss Cora is trying to help them,” she communicated to the most promising of her company. “All because of Arthur Stanton. I reckon she is afraid his grandmother mightn’t like for him to be turned down, and she wants to keep on her good side. But we’ll show her, won’t we?”

She was an inspiring little creature, and, despite the turbulence of her nature and a certain and not always agreeable power of bending things and persons to her will, she would win for her cause followers, and thereafter count upon their loyalty. She now succeeded in awaking their determination to surpass the other class, and they began work with good will. When again the bright banner of victory floated over the child, by the teacher’s increasing their lesson, Arthur sought to carry dissatisfaction into her ranks, by openly on the playground and secretly in the school-room, taunting

them with being led by a Yankee. Miss Cora caught a whisper not intended for her ears, and then she knew the time had come to act. Before the assembled school she briefly recounted the difficulty, told why she had divided the class, and followed up her words with the revelation of the present effort to destroy the well-won reputation of the school efficiency in this branch of study.

“And this is your loyalty to the traditions of your school!” she exclaimed, her cold eyes passing from the face of one offender to the other. “Because the strangers who have come in are trying to help you to maintain the fair fame of the school of your forefathers, and are succeeding, you would destroy it. If this is the strength of your devotion to your traditions, here or elsewhere, the strangers will have no trouble in overthrowing them. But one tradition shall not be destroyed while I rule here—the tradition of Stanton School for efficiency in every study taught in it. And the first offender against this intention of mine will be expelled.”

That was all she said, but they knew she meant it, and Arthur's second attempt was frustrated. But Miss Cora realized well that the snake had only been scotched, and beheld with pain the ever-increas-

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ing inharmony among her pupils. The words that now came ringing to her from the playground had grown so frequent they had ceased to cause her surprise; but, as she listened to them that Friday, they appeared more bitter than before. The voice of Lucy beat on her ears like the resonant strokes of a deep-hearted bell, and well she knew they were directed toward Arthur Stanton.

"They will have to fight it out," she said wearily. It seemed that the other pupils had reached the same conclusion, for the adherents of neither side offered any assistance.

"I say you didn't play fair!" cried Arthur, and the listening woman wondered how long that intense hate and fierce wrath could be held within bounds. "You stole it—like Yankees always do. You are nothing but thieves and robbers, anyhow!"

"I didn't steal it!" cried Lucy. "And you are lying when you say I did! And if Yankees are thieves, Rebels are liars, and I'd rather be a thief any day than a liar—so I would!"

"Don't dare call me a Rebel and a liar, or I'll—I'll—" cried the boy, choking with rage.

"Rebel! Liar! Rebel! Li—"

The word was not finished, for, forgetting every

instinct of the chivalry of his race, the maddened boy leaped across the intervening space and struck the little girl a cruel blow in the face.

"Coward!" cried a voice like finely tempered steel, as Jasper Long bounded forward and delivered a stinging blow to Arthur. That the defender of the hated one, and the denouncer of himself, should come from one of his own class, and that one the boy whom he had called his friend, as for generations the families had been friends, was for a moment more staggering to Arthur than the stroke he had received. His surprise passed soon, however, and then a fight followed, which left Miss Cora wondering, as she tried to reach and separate them, if our civilization is so deeply rooted after all the centuries. The sympathizers sprang to the defense, boys fought girls and girls fought each other, in the general conflict which swiftly ensued.

"For goodness sake! Dick! Eddie! Paul! help us keep the little savages from killing each other!" cried Annabelle, bounding from her grassy throne and starting toward the belligerents. With their assistance, and that of Carry and Emma, hastily summoned from their meditative walk, Miss Cora finally restored peace, and the army of fighters

was marshalled into the school-room, where the remainder of the recitation hour was spent in sullen silence, while the teacher, sitting before her desk, sought in every chamber of her mind for a solution of the problem.

As she meditated, Miss Cora bestowed an occasional glance upon the principals in the fight. Lucy's face still wore its angry flush, her eyes still sparkled with an angry light. Anger seemed to scintillate from the quivering little body, and the looks she flung across the room at her antagonists were filled with hate.

Sylva was crying silently behind her geography. The earliest lesson her mother had imparted was the lack of gentility displayed by the contentious. Ladies, said that aristocratic monitor, considered it beneath them to enter into a quarrel, and they scornfully ignored all occasions leading to it. And she had not quarreled but actually had fought, and there was not even the excuse of an exasperating occasion for her conduct. She scarcely knew what the dispute was about. All she was conscious of was that it was between Lucy and Arthur, and Lucy had called him names. It was in Arthur's cause she had forever disgraced herself, and he had

not recognized her partnership by so much as a glance. She had stolen timid looks at him across the top of her geography, and always found his eyes fixed on space, while his pale face grew paler under the strain of his emotions.

It was that face, those eyes, that added to the trouble of the young teacher. She could not fathom their meaning, and their strangeness filled her with alarm. Had they displayed the wrath of Lucy or the shame of Sylva, she would have known how to deal with her turbulent pupils; but under the inscrutable whiteness of Arthur's face, the deep silence of his eyes, she felt baffled.

The only undisturbed one in the room was Jasper Long. He had led the band into the school-room, and on taking his seat had brought out his books and was soon deeply engrossed in their study. He had done his duty as he saw it in striking Arthur, but since his teacher thought otherwise, there was no sense in rebelling, and to-morrow's lessons might as well be studied now as in the evening. Not once did he lift his soft dark eyes to send a glance of reproach to Sylva, or of sympathy to Lucy.

As the minutes passed it was to the quiet boy Miss Cora found her eyes and her thoughts oftenest



turning. It was so unlike him to go against a friend, and she could not recall that he had ever shown any great partiality toward Lucy. Of all the little girls he had seemed the most attached to Milly, when her devotion to Annabelle permitted her to mingle with the other children. And yet it was he who had sprung to the defense of the little girl. It was splendid. Though opposed to fighting, Miss Cora felt her blood tingle as she recalled the instant where Jasper's well-directed blow sent Arthur staggering across the playground. Arthur deserved it, and, if the general conflict had not followed, she would not have punished the boy. Even now she was inclined to temper his punishment, but refrained because it would necessitate an action on the incident on her part, and Miss Cora was not yet prepared to act. She felt instinctively that this life in the school was but the prefiguration of what was to come, when her pupils were men and women, and she desired that her part in it, at least, should be guided by prudence. Moreover, it was not the time when passion ruled the little minds around her to try to reason with them. She would wait until it had cooled, until they had had an opportunity themselves to reflect on their conduct, before approaching the subject.

## CHAPTER IV

"I **SEE** my son chose more wisely than even I imagined in selecting you for the teacher of Stanton School."

Thus said Mrs. Stanton the following morning, sitting alone with Miss Cora in the school-room, while without the few early-arrived pupils wondered the cause of this visit from Arthur's grandmother.

Milly, alarmed by the fight, had run home crying, and in the suppressed excitement of the afternoon, had not been missed, until the little recess failed to bring her to Annabelle's side. As she was speeding across the back yard on the way to the log house blessed by the protecting presence of her mother, she had encountered the younger Mrs. Stanton, a frail little woman, whom grief, as if to make up for the cruelty of fate in thrusting it into her life, had made only fairer and more interesting. By her the flying child was stopped and questioned concerning

her tears and absence from school. Hearing she had been frightened away by the fight the young widow laughed prettily and said she feared Milly did not come of fighting blood.

"But he hit Arthur, and—and—and—it hurt me, too!" sobbed the child.

"Who hit Arthur?" asked Mrs. Stanton.

"Jasper Long," she answered.

"Jasper Long!" repeated the widow, while a faint color came into her cheeks, for Jasper's uncle had been stopping his horse of late quite frequently at Stanton Hall, and she wondered if the gossip of the neighborhood could have had anything to do with the quarrel on the playground. "Why did Jasper strike Arthur, Milly?" she then asked.

"I don't know, ma'am. I wasn't playing with them. I was sitting up with Annabelle," said Milly.

Young Mrs. Stanton spent uncomfortable hours, until four o'clock sent home her son. She met him on the walk, and when her question brought the startling answer, "Because I hit Lucy Frazier," she drew back, exclaiming:

"You struck a little girl! O Arthur! Arthur! what would your father say!

"But she called me a Rebel and—and a liar!" he cried, chokingly.

Without another word, she bade him go to his grandmother and tell her all, for early the younger Mrs. Stanton had realized that she was not equal to the task of directing the last of the Stantons. Though she had borne him, he was in part a stranger to her, and believing it were better for the boy if he were solely in his grandmother's charge, she did not turn away from the delicately offered attention of Jasper Long's uncle, even though she had loved her soldier-husband and fondly treasured his memory. She was not able to deal with complicity of character. Her husband, in this particular, had been a sore trial to her, while the knowledge that she could not understand him, had detracted from the happiness he had found in their brief wedded life, as it might have marred it, had sufficient time for it to develop been allowed.

The story her grandson told her, sent Mrs. Stanton across the fields to the school-house at an early hour the following morning, and on hearing the young teacher's reason for having taken no step in the matter, it was then the elder lady exclaimed:

"I see my son chose more wisely than even I

imagined in selecting you for the teacher of Stanton School!"

Miss Cora could not prevent the little blush that stole into her cheeks at the compliment, although she hated herself for it. A teacher ought to be superior to such vanity, she held.

"I do not want to interfere with you in any way, Miss Austin," continued Mrs. Stanton, "but I had a talk with Arthur yesterday evening. He knows he did wrong and he is willing to make amends. He will publicly apologize to the little girl to-day, but he wanted me to come over and tell you. He said he could not do that."

"Publicly, Mrs. Stanton?" repeated the little teacher, as before her rose the white face and fixed eyes of the boy. "Is that necessary? It was only a playground quarrel."

"That is true, and still, Miss Austin, we must not forget we are in a period of transition," said Mrs. Stanton. "Everywhere around us we see the old order changing. There are some things we must keep at any cost. One of these is the chivalry of the South. While our men hold our women in the old chivalrous regard, our homes are preserved, and while our homes stand, our State stands."

"I do not quite agree with you there, Mrs. Stanton," said the younger woman, her eyes traveling past the calm face to the group of playing boys and girls outside the door. "There is, as you say, change everywhere, and it is as bound to affect the home and the State as any other of our institutions. Not to ask for change in these two presupposes perfection in them. Good as are our American homes and government, they are still a long way off from perfection, and they are not going to reach it by being kept stationary. Nor do I view the chivalry of man to woman as you do. It is the last relic of another transitional period; that period when the beauty of right had begun to dawn upon the dim mind of the race—in Europe, I should add, for we do not know but it may elsewhere in other times have known a similar experience. That newly born truth was weak and required defense, and we find the bravest and best of the men of that time riding about redressing human wrongs. They do not do so now for that truth guides the race. And so we find that this chivalry to woman is nothing more than the implication of belief in her weakness, calling for defense. With the story of these four years of war still fresh in our minds, we know that in

strength, and courage and lofty patriotism woman stands the equal of the strongest, the bravest, the most patriotic of men. Now my ideal of the perfect relationship between man and woman is that in which he recognizes her as a human being like himself; as she is, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, neither his superior nor his inferior, demanding not his veneration and needing not his protection—simply a woman, the other part of the human family. Of course," she finished quickly, while the color crept into her cheeks, for it was rarely she expressed her views, "I do not object to Arthur offering an apology to Lucy, but it ought to be because he struck her, not because he struck a girl—the same apology he would offer to Jasper had he stood in Lucy's place."

Mrs. Stanton sat aghast. Never in her fifty years of life had she heard such heretical doctrine preached. As she gazed on the girl before her, noted the new strength, the new determination, the new will to do and dare, and there rose before her mental vision the picture of her daughter-in-law, the last product of the old time, she knew she was listening to the announcement of the new truth, even as those who stood in the dawn of the Chival-

rous Age had heard it; and though it meant the destruction of all her ideals, her soul was courageous enough to hail it.

"I will not say you are not right, Miss Austin," she said slowly. "But I am an old woman, and to the old, old things are best. We may view Arthur's apology in a different light, still both of us think it is a good thing to do."

When she was gone, Miss Cora began her restless pacing of the floor. She was experiencing in anticipation the humiliation that would be the proud boy's, when he stood before the school to acknowledge his fault and ask the pardon of the hated stranger. If it were Sylva now—but well she knew that it would never have happened with Sylva. The school had assembled when Arthur, wearing the white face and set gaze of the day previous, entered the room, and advanced to the desk where the teacher sat.

"Do you still wish to apologize to Lucy?" she asked in low tones, and he knew by her words that it rested solely with himself whether or not he should follow the counsels of his grandmother. One brief moment he hesitated, then he said:

"Yes, ma'am."

"Very well," she said, and tapped on the desk



with her pencil. "Children, Arthur has something to say to you."

He turned his face, as white now as it would be in death, and, fixing his blue eyes on Lucy Frazier, said, in tones quiet but distinct:

"I am sorry I struck you yesterday, Lucy, and caused the fight. I ask you and Miss Cora, and all of you, to pardon me."

Miss Cora waited an instant, thinking some of the older pupils might make an acknowledgment of the words, but there was only silence, except for something like a sob from the place where Lucy sat; then she said:

"We accept your apology, Arthur. It was a manly act. I trust your companions will profit by the example you have given them, and always remember that while it is natural to resent an insult, it indicates a supreme victory over one's self to acknowledge one's fault and apologize for it."

Mechanically Lucy took up her book, but instead of the pages before her, she saw only Arthur Stanton's face, instead of the murmur of voices around her, she heard only his words, and through the crucial moments that followed, hate of the boy died in her breast, and grey-cloaked remorse crept into its place.

It was she who had done wrong, she cried, woman-like, now that the irrevocable was a fact, taking all the blame to herself. Her one wish had been to triumph over him, and when she had succeeded she had made her victory all the bitterer for him. She had missed no opportunity of antagonizing him and grasped every means of humiliating him which the school-room and playground presented. And she had deliberately driven him to this last humiliating act, and counted all her triumphs as nothing compared with that of making him strike her.

And now he had brought all her triumphs to naught, for he had conquered her hate for him, and while her feelings toward him had undergone this change, she felt his had also been affected. There was a dissimilarity in the change, however. Instead of hate, he now entertained for her indifference, and she smartingly realized that the bitterest hate were preferable to his perfect indifference. It put her out of his life completely. She might cause her class to outdistance his by every page in the spelling-book, and he would not notice it; she might win her game unfairly on the playground, and he would not know it. There would

be no more of the quarrels which were more desirable with him than the most harmonious association with others. She had no more part in the things that concerned him. It is little wonder that presently Lucy obtained permission to leave the room, and, free from the eyes of others, she should crouch at the foot of the old apple tree and weep in her young sorrow.

## CHAPTER V

IN the course of time another daughter and a son came to the new home on the hill, and the added lives and attendant cares appeared to separate Lucy from her parents and drive her to the home of Aunt Jenny and Uncle Major when she sought the companionship of older minds. Aunt Jenny resented the apparent neglect of her idol.

"Lil'l Miss 'll have to leahn to look out foh huse'f, I tell yoh," she confided to her husband. "Mistah Frasur don't have no thought but foh his boy, an' Mis', she jus' thinks de sun rizes and sets on dat baby gyurl. Lil'l Miss has got evahthing she needs, 'ceptin' love."

"Yoh sut'nly is talkin' in yoh sleep, ole woman!" exclaimed Uncle Major. "If Lil'l Miss ain't got love, I'd like to know who's got it."

"Yes, she's got love, Lil'l Miss hab," said the old negress, "but not de way she want it."

"Dey ain't nobody gits things jes' de way dey wants it," observed Uncle Major, reflectively. "De

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good Lawd don't 'tend we should, I reck'n, least-  
always I ain't nevah seen nobody dat did. Yoh  
'membah how 'twas wif ole Marse? He'd done got  
evahthing—big plantashon, fines' lady in de lan'  
foh his wife, plenty uv suvants an' money an' a  
likely son to come in aftah him; an' he'd give de  
lan' an' slaves an' money an' mebbe his son, foh one  
lil'l gal. 'Majah,' he done said to me, when me'n  
lil'l Sally was playin' by de ole cabin doh, 'Majah,  
dah ain't nufin on earth so sweet as a lil'l datah's  
love.' An' den I knowed dat my masteh dat could  
a-done wif me jes' what he wanted to do, wah  
jealous uv me, kase I had dat lil'l black gal to love  
me. No'm, yoh don't fine it nowhah dat anybody  
gits jes' de thing he mos' wants. I'se an ole man,  
an' I'se seen much, but I ain't nevah yit seen de  
man oh de woman dat wouldn't giv all dey's got  
an' dat othah folkes thinks is so good, foh some  
lil'l thing dat ain't be'n 'lowed 'em. So Lil'l Miss  
ain't no wuss off'n de res'."

Aunt Jenny sat silent under the philosophizing of  
her spouse. Perhaps she heard him, although it is  
more likely that she did not, so full was her mind  
of her "Lil'l Miss," who was now entering upon  
a girlhood which promised to be as stormy as her

childhood had been. She came in upon the old couple now, a little willow basket in her hand.

"Here are some groceries Mamma sent you, Aunt Jenny, and a cake I baked for you and Uncle Major myself," she said, going to Aunt Jenny's side. The old negress drew the girl to her and Lucy reluctantly submitted to the kiss to which she had never grown quite accustomed.

"Yoh's jus' like an angel, Lil'l Miss, an' yoh mammy's anothah," said Aunt Jenny, for though Mrs. Frazier had not her entire approval, her kindness could not be forgotten. "Wha's yoh be'n away so long dat yoh don't come to see us no moh?"

"I was down Wednesday and this is only Saturday," said Lucy, taking a stool and watching Uncle Major, who was lifting a coal of fire to drop it into the tin-cup of water which he was on the point of drinking.

"What makes you do that, Uncle Major?" she demanded.

"To het it up, Lil'l Miss, a-cou'se," he replied, "an' to mek de wattah taste good. Dah ain't nuffin bettah'n foh yoh system dan wattah wif a coal uv fiah drapped into it."

As they were talking, the door opened, and a

young negro boy came in. He pulled off his cap and stood attention, while Lucy surveyed him.

"Dat's my datah's younges' boy," said Major, proudly. "He's come to stay wif us."

"What is your name?" asked Lucy.

"Gineral Joe Jerry Stanton," replied the boy.

"But what do you call yourself?" she demanded.

"Joe," he answered.

"We's be'n tellin' Joe all 'bout yoh, Lil'l Miss," said Uncle Major, "an' he's be'n mighty anxyus to git to see yoh. He thinks a mighty heep uv yoh. An' I tole Joe he mus' allers 'membah yoh's his Lil'l Miss de same as ouhs, an' tek ca'h uv yoh de same as we would. An' Joe 'll do it, foh he's gwian to be a good boy."

General Joe Jerry's eyes were bulging with pride as he listened to his grandfather, and generations of loyal attachment to white superiors brought to being in his heart a devotion for the child of the stranger that time was destined to prove after the way it tests most of the affections of humanity.

"I know whah dah's a red-bird's nes', wif fo' young 'uns in it," Joe confided as he climbed the hill with Lucy, carrying the basket on his arm.

"You mustn't touch them," commanded she.

"Why, don't yoh want 'em?" he exclaimed.

"Certainly not!" she answered. "How would mamma feel if some one were to steal the baby?"

"Dey'd think dat much mo'f yoh," suggested Joe, who had heard things not intended for his ears.

"No, they wouldn't," she said, shaking her head. "They'd just miss the baby. I tell you what I'd like better than the bird's nest—to ride the sorrel colt. But I've got nobody to help me put the bridle on him."

"I'll he'p yoh," immediately said Joe.

"Oh! I just knew you would, as soon as I saw you," cried the delighted child.

"How soon do yoh want to ride him?" asked Joe, proudly.

"Right now, if I could," she answered. "But I can't, for it's too late, and if papa were to know about it, he would forbid me. But tomorrow afternoon, while papa is taking a nap and mamma is reading, and little brother and the baby are asleep we'll do it. They'll think I am playing in the orchard, and won't bother about me. I know how to ride, do you?"

Joe admitted that he did, and Lucy informed him that while she was exercising the sorrel colt, he could mount old Molly.



The following afternoon they coaxed the colt, as yet broken only to the bridle, into the stable, and after considerable effort, succeeded in getting the bit into his mouth. Then they led him to the fence, and while Joe held him, Lucy climbed the rails and sprang astride his back. On the instant the colt felt her weight, the domestication of centuries was forgotten and the wild nature of more centuries predominated. With a leap that took away Lucy's breath, he left the fence and started across the hill, she clinging with fear-tightened hands to the light chestnut mane.

On he went until the fence separating Mr. Frazier's land from the Stanton plantation was reached. Though high, he took it and plunged down the valley, at the distant head of which gleamed the white walls of the Hall.

It happened this Sunday afternoon, that, while his grandmother slept and his pretty mother entertained her now accepted suitor, Arthur went forth into the fields with a book under his arm, and Milly by his side. It was cool in the valley under the willows that guarded the brook, and he often spent vacation hours there reading, and often Milly accompanied him. They were in their accustomed place when

the beat of the colt's feet reached their ears. They sprang up, and as they saw the colt coming toward them in maddened bounds, Lucy caught sight of Arthur, and then will failed her. Her hands lost hold on the long mane. A sickening sensation swept over her, as another leap of the frantic animal flung her into the air. An eternity seemed to pass, during which she felt herself falling, falling—would she never reach earth? Then, unconsciousness.

"It's Lucy Frazier!" exclaimed Arthur. "I reckon she's dead. Hush crying, Milly!"

He caught the weeping Milly by the hand, and held it closely in his, as they ran to the place where Lucy lay motionless in the sunlight. He dropped on his knees beside her, and felt all his strength slipping away from him as he looked on her still, white face. He forgot the weeping Milly. He forgot himself. He touched one of the outstretched hands, and as he did so, he suddenly remembered how his grandmother would feel for his pulse when he complained of feeling ill. With trembling, cold fingers he sought the pulse in the little blue-veined wrist, and finding its faint throbs, something broke in his heart. She was not dead!

"Here, Milly," he cried, taking off his hat, "run

down to the brook and get me some water! Run, I tell you! She may die!"

Milly needed no second bidding when Arthur was the speaker, and while her little bare feet carried her through the newly-cut briars, whose sharp thorns pierced them, Arthur bent over the unconscious Lucy. He noted the delicate fairness of her face, the fine outline of her eyebrows, the long curl of her lashes, and the pathetic, appealing droop of the pale lips. This was not the Lucy he had hated, the Lucy to whom he had become indifferent, but another Lucy, one unknown until this hour.

Then the miracle happened. The white lips opened and the blue eyes looked deeply into his. Something seemed to run into the boy's heart, and it flooded his face with light.

"Oh, you're not hurt!" he cried, as she pushed him away and struggled to rise.

"Where's the colt?" she asked, faintly.

"He's gone! We can't catch him."

"I—I—think I'll go up to Aunt Jenny's," then said Lucy.

Up the hill ran Milly, the water dripping from the straw hat and the blood oozing from the pierced feet.

"Throw out the water, Milly!" commanded Arthur. "We don't need it."

When she reached his side, he took his moist hat from her hand and said:

"You can go back to the house, Milly. Take my book with you. I have to go up to Aunt Jenny's with Lucy."

It was like a journey through an unreal world to Lucy, that walk to Aunt Jenny's. The familiar hills and trees, the little stream playing in the sunshine, seemed something wholly apart from her life; and further away than heaven to her conscious mind was the log house, dimly seen, toward which they were moving and in which she would find rest from this strange weariness that oppressed her.

She knew that the boy walking by her side was Arthur Stanton, but his voice as he talked to her and hers as she struggled to reply, appeared to come from a great distance; and the things of which he spoke, the runaway colt, his surprise and Milly's grief, were as far off from her existence as his words from her ears. Her feet grew heavier with each step, she was anxious to rest them, but she knew she must reach the log house, so that Arthur could return to his book and Milly. She could see

Aunt Jenny sitting in the shadow cast by the house, in her Sunday white apron and blue calico dress, and Uncle Major lying on the bench where the sunshine fell.

"I suppose Aunt Jenny wonders who we are," Arthur was saying, as the old negress turning her head and beholding the approaching pair, rose slowly from her chair and watched them in amazement.

"I suppose so," said Lucy, faintly, as she dragged herself forward. Then the world began to whirl around her—trees, hills, the log house and white-aproned old woman waddling toward them. Fast they spun and faster, trees flying after hills, Aunt Jenny whirling after the trees, and the log house after its mistress. This was the end of the world, about which she had so often puzzled. She gave a last thought to her mother and little brother, and then the black gulf swallowed her up, as Aunt Jenny's arms encircled her.

When she awoke out of the heavy sleep that followed, she found herself in a big feather bed, in a room filled with deep shadows. She lay for a moment motionless, trying to recall what had happened. Slowly the events of the afternoon came

back, and she knew she was in Aunt Jenny's big bed in her "company" room.

She climbed down and crept into the outer room, where Uncle Major, wrapped in his blue military cloak, sat, straight and forbidding, by the hearthstone, while Aunt Jenny moved slowly around preparing supper. A silence that was full of foreboding hung over the room, as Lucy paused on the threshold, unseen by its occupants. Then she heard Aunt Jenny saying:

"It's de fus' time evah young Marse sot foot on dah lan'. An' it wah huh dat fotched him. Dey ain't no good gwian to come uv it. It ar' moh uv de Injuns' work."

"Hush up, ole woman! Yoh don't know what's yoh talkin' 'bout," commanded her liege lord.

"Wisht to Gawd I didn't," cried the old woman, in an anguished voice. "Wisht I didn't have to see all de tr'ubbel dat's done come on my fambly, long a-foh I was bohn! Dey ain't be'n nuffin but tr'ubbel for de Stantons, all a-cause uv dis hyah house, an' de cuss de Injuns put on it. Why couldn't de ole Marse buil' his log house som'ers else, sides right hyah whah de Injuns had dah chu'ch an' prayed evah night to de debbil? Mebbe I don't

know what I'se talkin' erbout, an' my gran'daddy seein' de ha'nt evah night uv his life! Laz'ness, dat's why he done it!" she exclaimed scornfully, referring to the head of the white family. "Laz'ness is de reason! Dah wusn't no canebrakes to cleah away, an' no big trees to chop down, an' so he goes an' steals de lan' dey giv to de debbil an' de witches, an' make 'em mad 'gainst us foh evah-lastin'. Dey ain't none uv us but what's had trials an' triberlations 'nough to kill us. Look at Mis' Mary, ole Marse's sistah, dyin' uv a broken heart, 'cause Bob Dalton married huh cousin!"

"But dat wus Bob's work, not de Injuns'," said Uncle Major.

"Bob nuffin!" she ejaculated. "He'd nevah a-thought uv doin' sech a thing if de debbil wusn't 'gainst ouh fambly. An' look at Marse Jim, shot through de hea't by dat furrinah when dey fit a duel down to Lexin'un! An' Marse, hisse'f, dyin' uv tyfoid fevah, brung on by losin' his money when dat man run off wif de drove uv mules he sen' down Souf! An' look at po'r Marse Will comin' home from wah to die uv consum'shon, an' now his widder flirtin' 'long wif Cap'n Long, an' ole Mis' at huh wit's en' to hole de place togethah. No, suh!

dey ain't be'n nuffin but missury an' 'fliction foh ouh fambly, an' po'r lil'l A'thah ain't gwian to 'scapel I knowed it when I seed him comin' up de brook-side 'long wif Lil'l Miss. It was de debbil's work, bringin' dem togethah, nice na' fren'ly like, when dey's jus' be'n fightin' all dah lives."

"I think it's mighty nice dey's gwian to be fren's," observed Uncle Major.

"'Course yoh does, yoh ole wurfless Yank-nigger!" she exclaimed. "Reck'n yoh think it wus nice foh ole Marse entiahly to lose two uv his boys fightin' de English 'way up Norf, and kill hisse'f, fallin' from his hoss comin' home in de da'k? An' Mis' Mary to die uv a broken hea't, an' Marse Jim to git shot through de breas', an' ole Marse an' Marse Will to die, an' some wuss luck comin' to fall on A'thah?"

"I'd like to know what bad luck's gwian to fall on him, 'cause uv Lil'l Miss!" cried Major, angrily.

"An' Lil'l Miss, too! Po'r Lil'l Miss!" cried Aunt Jenny, dropping into a chair and covering her face with her hands. "Lil'l Miss, what ain't done nuffin', is gwian to be pitched into, all 'cause huh pappy owns de debbil's lan'! Po'r Lil'l Miss!"

Frightened, she knew not by what, Lucy stood for



a second surveying the noisy old woman and silent old man; then she saw the open door toward her right, and sprang through it out into the twilight. The change from the brilliant day which she seemed so lately to have left baffled her; but lifting her face, she saw the white path leading up the darkling hill to her home. Swift as a swallow she sped to it, filled with the desire to escape from the old negress, prophesying misfortune in the red fire-light. Panting, she reached the brow of the hill, with its long grey stable and homely barnyard scene—the cows, grouped together, chewing their cud; the horses, the sorrel colt, none the worse for his race, among them, nibbling at wisps of hay; the hogs, noisy as usual, and a few over-diligent hens neglecting the safe roosts for the possible finding of a grain of corn. The milking was done, and she wondered who had held open the gate for her father when he turned back the calves. Who had brought home the colt? Had any one told them of her wild ride that afternoon? Would they punish her for it? Thus she questioned as she hurried to the house, from the kitchen of which came the scent of frying ham, making her suddenly become conscious of the fact that she was hungry.

"Where have you been, Lucy?" asked her mother, as the child entered the kitchen and began to carry the dishes out to the dining-room.

"Down at Aunt Jenny's," she answered.

"Didn't you see it was getting late? Why didn't you come home?"

"No, ma'am, I didn't see it," said Lucy. "I was asleep in Aunt Jenny's big bed."

A frown showed on Mrs. Frazier's brow.

"Hereafter, Lucy, when you are sleepy, you must come home," she said, and, receiving Lucy's promise to do so, the incident closed.

With the dawn of the morning, however, Lucy caught a better perspective of the previous day, the crowning beauty of which was the complete change in Arthur's feelings toward her. . It was well worth being pitched headlong from the colt, and running the risk of a broken neck, to have him for a friend. Her little heart laughed as she remembered his chivalrous conduct, the sacrifice of the book and the devoted Milly to accompany her to Aunt Jenny's. She wished she could recall what he had talked about on that memorable walk, but his words were lost in the strange sleep which had overtaken her. When would she see him again, she wondered, as she gathered the raspberries for dinner.

Then she heard a soft voice calling:

"O Lil'l Miss, may I come in? I'se got something foh yoh."

She turned quickly and saw Joe, perched like a monkey, on top of the bars that opened into the garden from the stable lot.

"Yes," she said, slowly, hoping her mother would not see him.

"Wusn't dat de quicke's ride yoh evah took?" he asked, not knowing what else to say.

"Why didn't you hold him?" she demanded, although she knew she was well pleased that he had not done so.

"'Deed I tried, Lil'l Miss," cried the boy, "but he snatched de bridle outer my han', jus' like I snatch dis berry off'n de bush," and in illustration, a luscious berry disappeared down his throat.

Lucy's fear of her mother's displeasure, should the boy be discovered, grew stronger, and she asked:

"What have you got for me?"

"Guess!" he said.

"I can't!" she rejoined, petulantly. "I'm in a hurry. Mother wants to make a pie for dinner, and is waiting for the berries."

"I'll help you," he said, willingly.

"I don't need you," she answered. "Give me what Aunt Jenny sent me and then go away."

"'Tain't Aunt Jenny sen' it," he replied, with a broad grin.

"Uncle Major, then?"

"Nor Uncle Majah! Guess!" teased the boy.

"I tell you I can't! You're a bad boy to bother me like this. Give me what you have for me, and go right away."

Instantly Joe drew from his pocket a square piece of paper, folded, with one corner turned down. Lucy's fingers trembled as she opened it and read:

"Dear Lucy:

"I hope you are well and the colt got home all right. I laid down the fence between us, so he could get back without having to jump. I have a good story-book if you want to read it. I will leave it down at Aunt Jenny's this afternoon. It is a good book. I read it to Milly and she liked it, too. Good-bye.

"Your sincere friend,

"ARTHUR STANTON."

Lucy's cheeks were like the pinks nodding along the garden walk, and seeing her happiness, Joe's

eyes glistened with delight. As a reward she gave him a handful of berries, and when she was alone, she read again and again the note. "Your sincere friend, Arthur Stanton." Was there ever such good fortune allowed a little girl? What would not Sylva Dalton give to receive such a note? And he was going to leave his favorite book at Aunt Jenny's for her! Straightway Lucy determined that she would be there to receive it from his own hands. Monday, however, was a busy day for her mother, and Lucy's services were in constant demand. Not much hope was there of getting away, with the little brother needing her companionship and the baby demanding her care.

But where a woman has the will, she has the way, as has been said of old, and Lucy early proved her claim to feminine wit. As she was clearing the table after dinner, the remainder of the raspberry pie suggested the possibility of a visit to the log house, and she asked her mother's permission to carry it down to the old couple. Mrs. Frazier, rejoicing to see such consideration in her daughter, readily gave the permission to do so, when the dishes were washed and the baby rocked to sleep. The dishes flew through Lucy's hands, but the baby

was not so easily disposed of. At length the eyes so like her own were closed, the prattling voice grew still, and Lucy stole from the room, and taking the remainder of the pie, started for the house in the hollow. As she drew near it, her steps became slower, she began to wish she had not come, then she hoped Arthur was not there.

Thus beset by conflicting emotions, she passed around the corner of the house, and found Arthur sitting on the doorstep, while in his chair by the wall was Uncle Major, entertaining the youth with stories, which, however, had no connection with his four years' service with the Federal army. Both children expressed much surprise at seeing the other. Then, Aunt Jenny hearing the voice she loved above all other sounds on earth, came to the door, and received her gift, without, however, the voluble thanks to which Lucy had grown accustomed.

"Oh, you brought your book along!" said Lucy, taking the proffered place by his side on the step. "Read some of it to me and Uncle Major," she commanded, ignoring Aunt Jenny, whose mutterings of disapproval she could plainly hear, and the meek Joe, lying on the bench in the blistering sunshine. Nothing loath to display his elocutionary

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ability, Arthur obeyed; and while the mother wondered at Lucy's long delay, and Milly roamed sadly through the orchard waiting the return of Arthur, the boy and girl sat in the shadow of the old log house, forgetting duty and others in the pleasure of their companionship.

The following summer days brought strength to the friendship begun that Sunday afternoon. It had, of course, its frequent interruptions, for with natures like theirs conflict is never far away. Little Milly was sometimes permitted to join them, and always proved a bone of contention. Her absolute surrender of self to Arthur annoyed Lucy, partly because it seemed to show lack of pride on her part, wholly because she—Lucy—could never attain such a complete sacrifice as the poor little girl was capable of. There were moments when she felt Arthur, also, divined the difference between them, and his kindness to Milly was in marked contrast to his sometime cruel treatment of herself.

Thus the vacation passed and when September once more brought the scattered children to the schoolhouse, Miss Cora was surprised at the change she beheld, and pleased also, for with this establishment of friendship between Lucy and Arthur,

the old harmony was restored to the classroom and playground.

By none was her surprise shared more completely than by Jasper Long. Not having his teacher's larger knowledge of human nature, Jasper was unable to account for the transformation of Arthur, and the small amount of suspicion that lived in his noble nature was aroused.

This change in the boy wore for him a sinister motive, and for weeks he held himself on the alert, ready again to become the defender of the little stranger. But, beholding their many fierce quarrels, invariably followed by renewal of good fellowship, he realized they had advanced to a plane beyond him, the plane of mutual understanding and in which he could be only an intruder. He began to devote himself to the consolation of Milly, who, Annabelle not having returned that term, suffered deeply from the treatment of Lucy and the frequent neglect of Arthur.

But Sylva Dalton was not disposed to share Jasper's philosophy, and by every means known to the mind of an undisciplined and petted child, she sought to come between the two friends. Sometimes she succeeded by playing cruelly upon Arthur's



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southern sentiment, sometimes by rousing Lucy's pride in drawing attention to the boy's strong liking for Milly; but always the higher nature of both broke aside the barriers, and, vanquished, Sylva saw them friends as before.

Then to Jasper she would hasten, dragging her defeat with her, and always he shook his head and declared he could not understand why she did not want Lucy and Arthur to be friends, since, when they were, everything went along so pleasantly and harmoniously, and they all were so happy. Sylva, however, owned she was not happy but nobody cared for her. Every one thought more of the Yankee. Her tears would move the tender-hearted boy, and in striving to dry them, he assured her he thought more of her than he did of Lucy.

"But not more than you do of Milly!" asserted the jealous child, and when he could not deny her words, she flung at him the crime of Milly's poverty. Then Jasper realized why Arthur should prefer Lucy, Yankee though she were, to Sylva Dalton, even if their forefathers had been companions on the long journey to Kentucky, and together had shared the after-dangers of the infant Commonwealth.

## CHAPTER VI

It did not seem so very long to Miss Cora until the children who had battled on the playground had grown beyond it, and now occupied the place once sacred to Annabelle, long ago married, and her early lovers. And yet there had been changes enough in her own life and the lives around her to mark the progress of time.

A notable one had come into the school, inaugurated by the teacher herself. The prosperity that was attending her brother's business, soon made her realize that her savings, however well invested, would prove an unnoticeable part in the fortune his children would inherit, while in her work they could be used with great benefit for her pupils. The condition of these pupils, many of them sons and daughters of generations of educated parents, others possessing unusual talent, appealed to her great heart. She knew the former, because of her parents' poverty, could not but perpetuate the scholarship of their race, while the latter, for the same

reason, would be prevented from elevating themselves by means of their natural gifts; hence, she heroically set about to remedy the evil in as far as was in her power.

She spent her long vacations in college, studying branches taught in the higher schools and academies, and her leisure during the remainder of the year in perfecting herself in them. It would be, of course, impossible for one person, however capable, to impart this knowledge to the various classes, in one short day; and so she decided to bring about a division of the school. When the innovation was suggested to the trustees, they gasped for breath. Where, they exclaimed, was the second room to come from, when they had difficulty enough in getting money from the people of the district to keep the present one in repairs?

"I have considered all that," said Miss Cora. "There is the little cabin in Mr. Dalton's sugar-tree grove, across the road from the school. It is never used now, and I am certain he would be only too glad to help along the work by letting us have it. The children are getting up an entertainment, admission to which will supply us with a sufficient amount of money to pay for windows, a small

blackboard and chalk. Mr. Miller would not, I know, charge for the making of a recitation bench and two more desks, with the ones we could spare from the school, would be sufficient, if the material were supplied him: I shall provide that."

The last remark modified them considerably, and more than one mentally vowed it should not all be provided for by the plucky little woman, if the project were accepted by their associates, which was not likely, for how, they asked her, could they provide a teacher for the primary classes, when it was with difficulty they secured funds to pay her, and that far below her value.

"I will provide the teachers," said Miss Cora, "from among the larger boys and girls. Besides the opportunity it will afford them, if I have more time for their instruction in the higher branches, the teaching of the smaller classes will be a valuable experience for them. There is nothing that helps to develop the mind and mould character more than teaching. Besides they will in a measure repay for the higher education they are receiving, in assisting the teacher with her duties. I will spend a portion of each day with the lower school. Now, gentlemen, I have thought out my plan carefully, and, if

it is accepted, the children of this district will secure the benefits of a higher education, which, otherwise, few if any of them will have."

"But," objected Mr. Dalton, "have you considered, Miss Cora, the additional work this will entail upon yourself? You will have then two schools practically to teach, with only the time and salary for one?"

"I have considered it all," said Miss Cora. "For the past three years I have been preparing myself for it. I can now give instructions in Latin and French, in bookkeeping and higher mathematics. I have studied drawing and next vacation intend to take up painting, in order to be able to give instructions in colors. I even took lessons in embroidery," she concluded with a nervous little laugh, "for while all these girls should possess this ladylike accomplishment, not all, Mr. Dalton, have a mother like Sylva to instruct them in the gentle art of the needle."

"Such devotion to the welfare of the school, gentlemen," said Mr. Dalton, "commands our instant and hearty co-operation. We cannot be less interested in it than Miss Cora."

And so Miss Cora gained her point, and, when

the next session opened, the second room was ready for occupancy. The plan proved feasible and new glory was added to the fame of Stanton school. It now took rank above the town school, and the trustees voted an increase in Miss Cora's salary to be paid by themselves and a few of the more prosperous men of the district, when several applications were received from children living in the village. This Miss Cora accepted on condition that the school term should be extended another month. Then was Miss Cora happy, for she felt something could be accomplished.

In the course of time, Arthur and Lucy became her chief dependence in the primary department, while maintaining their high rank as scholars. With Lucy her success was the result of ambition, but with Arthur it was born of the knowledge that manhood was approaching and he must fit himself for it because of the necessity for him to win back the fortunes of his house. There had been other divisions of his once princely estate, and all that now remained were two hundred acres, and the old Hall, fast going to ruin. A farmer he felt he could not be, with so small an acreage, when his forefathers, possessing thousands, had only succeeded

in holding their own among the planters. All that remained for him was the power that might be stored in his brain, and this he spared no effort to develop. The use he would make of it was the subject of many a grave conversation between him and his grandmother, for his mother had married the gallant Captain and gone to her new home. Finally, unable to decide for him, she sought counsel with Miss Cora, and that young woman's embarrassment was apparent. Had it been concerning Jasper Long she had been questioned, she unhesitatingly would have advised that he should study art, for since the day the first drawing lesson had been given, he went to his work as a bird to the open sky.

It was not likely that he would be permitted to follow the call of his soul, for his father expected that he would uphold the traditions of the family, raise large crops, fat beeves and good horses; for, while these were not proving as profitable as formerly, the condition, he knew, would eventually change. The country would recover from the effects of war, grow more powerful than it had ever been, and in that time it was upon the farmer it must depend, who would in consequence reap a rich

harvest once more. Thus he reasoned, and, if he did not withdraw Jasper from the school and early instruct him in his calling, it was because the Longs had always been scholarly inclined, and, as he was in the prime of life, there was time enough for the boy. Hence Jasper had continued to be numbered among Miss Cora's pupils, even after the down of manhood showed upon his face, held there by love of the work she taught him to do with pencil and brush, and because it sheltered Milly.

But of Arthur, Miss Cora knew not what to say. Had he been other than the proud old woman's only hope and joy, she would have advised that he content himself with the livelihood to be found in his depleted inheritance, or put to use the bookkeeping in which he had become proficient. She could not, however, give this crowning pain to the heart that had suffered so much before its lowered banners; but for long days afterward her sensitive conscience reproached her, because she weakly suggested the law.

At the words the old face brightened.

"It was what I recommended, Miss Cora," she said, "but Arthur was diffident. He feels he has not the subtlety of mind it calls for, nor the deliv-



ery. None of the Stantons were lawyers, he said. But that, I told him, is no reason why he should not succeed. My father was a lawyer of marked ability, and why should not Arthur inherit that talent?"

Her certitude concerning Arthur's ability in this department of work disconcerted Miss Cora. She knew the intuitions of the boy were correct, and, when he began applying himself to the study of Latin, and she found him reading Blackstone instead of poetry of which he was fond, her eyes grew dim with tears of pity.

"It is not his work," she thought, sadly. "He will succeed in it, but he will not be happy. All his life, instead of the dull office and duller court-room, he will see the green fields and open skies and the things that are not for him."

While Lucy kept pace with her classmates in the new studies into which they were gradually introduced, it was in the little school across the road she was most truly in her sphere, and Miss Cora early perceived that the classes taught by Lucy excelled those of the other volunteers, while complaint against her method of discipline was never heard. It might have been her ownself living her youth

over again, and often, in the solemn moments that occasionally came to her, as she meditated on the future of the school should she die or be obliged to retire, devoutly she wished she could go with the knowledge that her work had fallen into the capable hands of Lucy Frazier.

Even as she voiced the wish she smiled at the improbability of its fulfillment. Lucy Frazier to settle down into the monotonous life of a teacher, who always sought whatever excitement and change the simple life afforded? Lucy to content herself with a work of pure unselfishness, who demanded that every one should contribute to her pleasure? Lucy willingly to turn to her life of spinsterhood, who already was learning the power of her beauty and as quickly learning how best to employ it? Lucy to become the ill-paid, hard-working teacher of Stanton school, whose father was being numbered among the men who were coming on in the country, and whose son would stand with her own nephews among its leaders? Miss Cora turned from her thought, with a sigh. Elsewhere than in Alexander Frazier's daughter must she look for her successor.

And yet, sitting on the green hill with her classmates around her and below on the playground her

sometimes pupils noisily engaged in the games she had lately abandoned, Lucy fancied it would indeed be pleasant thus to spend her days. Once she voiced the sentiment, and could have bitten her tongue for the words, as she saw the curl of Sylva Dalton's lip.

"What a glorious ambition!" she exclaimed. "To be an old maid like Miss Cora?"

"I don't think it is nice in you to call Miss Cora names, Sylva," complained Milly, whose dark beauty had grown strangely deep and pathetic with the approach of womanhood.

"Oh, don't you?" exclaimed Sylva, treating her to a look more scornful than she had given Lucy. "I regret exceedingly that I must forfeit your good opinion. I scarcely know how I shall survive. Nevertheless, I must still persist in calling Miss Cora an old maid. I am sure she is old; I am equally sure she is unmarried; if these two conditions do not constitute an old maid,—I wish you would tell me what does?"

The high-flown language silenced Milly, as she knew it would; but Lucy stepped into the breach.

"I can tell you what constitute good manners, Sylva, if you want to know?" she said, as her voice and face were cold as steel.

"Thank you, but I was taught good manners before you learned the meaning of the words," she said loftily, although the pink deepened on her cheek, for there was a laugh on Jasper's lips.

"It is strange you do not practice your teachings," observed Lucy.

"I do—among my equals," she answered, while her black eyes traveled slowly and meaningly from Lucy to Milly.

"Come, Milly, let us leave Sylva with her equals!" exclaimed Lucy, turning suddenly upon the quiet girl seated on the grass, her faded muslin dress spread out so as to cover her feet, illy shod in a pair of shoes that had been Arthur's mother's. Reluctantly she rose, for she was averse to leave Arthur, especially when his companion would be this scornful girl.

"Good-bye, boys! Maybe you will enjoy yourselves!" cried Lucy, resting her laughing eyes upon Arthur and Jasper.

"We expect to, since we are going along," said Arthur, thrusting his hand under Jasper's arm, and they marched away, leaving Sylva, wild with rage, upon the hillside.

"No one shall speak disrespectfully of Miss Cora

and hold my good opinion," said Arthur, not careful of the pitch of his voice. "It was the bravest thing in the world the way you stood up for her, Milly! Wasn't it Jasper?"

"That's what it was," said Jasper. "But you can always count on Milly standing up for any one she loves."

Milly said nothing, but her beautiful eyes were glowing under the downcast lids, for sweeter than all the things of earth was praise from Arthur. A lump rose in Lucy's throat. They had no word for her, who had finished, with victory, the battle of defense Milly had begun and abandoned; for she could not see that they intuitively recognized that Milly's act had been prompted by love of the teacher, while Lucy's had for its motive the desire to defeat a personal foe. Their walk led them to the spring hidden by the hill. Reaching it, they once more sought seats on the grass. After they had again discussed Sylva's rudeness, Lucy, out of a fit of silence, said:

"And I meant what I said. I wish things might go on forever as they are now, but they won't, for me anyhow, for my father intends to send me away to a convent school in September. There now!

they told me not to say anything about it, but I couldn't help it. I know I shall hate it! Oh-h-h!" and Lucy's flowerlike face dropped into her hands, and tears of sorrow for the approaching severance of these ties, and deeper sorrow that Arthur should prefer Milly to her, bedewed her fingers and crept down to the slender wrists.

The boys stared at each other in surprise, for it was the first time in their experience that such a good fortune had befallen a pupil of Stanton school. Milly, however, thought only of Lucy's grief, and she flung her thin little arms around her rival's neck and whispered words of love and sympathy. Then, the others recovered from their astonishment, and Jasper, in a quiet way, offered his congratulations.

"You say that because you are glad to have me leave Stanton school," cried Lucy. "I don't know why you should. I never did anything to you. If it were Arthur, I could understand it—but you!"

"Why, Lucy!" exclaimed Arthur. "Don't you appreciate what your father is doing for you? Jasper does, and so he is pleased at the good fortune that is yours."

"Good fortune!" repeated Lucy, the pretty face still wet. "Where is the good fortune in being sent

a hundred miles from home, your mother and father, your little sister and brother, and every one and everything you love. I know I shall be the most miserable girl on earth. I shall hate it. I wish I could die before September!"

"O Lucy! Lucy! please hush!" cried Milly, turning her deerlike eyes around, as if she expected to see the grim Executioner advancing to give the desired freedom.

"I shall die there of homesickness," insisted Lucy, enjoying amidst all her grief the excitement she was causing. "It would be better to die now and save them the expense of taking me there and back."

"You won't die, Lucy," said Arthur, confidently. "You will get used to it after a while. My grandmother went to a boarding-school, and it was taught by nuns, and she liked it. They were kind and good to the pupils, she said, and instructed them in many accomplishments."

"Accomplishments!" exclaimed Lucy. "I don't want to be taught accomplishments! I'd rather stay here with Miss Cora and learn Latin and mathematics."

"Oh; they teach those things, too," said Arthur; "but for ladies accomplishments are best."

"I think, Arthur," she said slowly, and her words dropped scorchingly on the boy's heart, "your place is back on the hill with Sylva. Milly and I are not of the class that turns out ladies according to your type."

The color dwindled from Arthur's face. He rose slowly and said, his voice stumbling over the words:

"I believe you are right, Miss Frazier!"

For a moment his eyes rested on her, unconsciously stamping on his memory her face as it looked in that moment, which seemed to him to be one of solemn farewell; then his gaze passed to Milly, drooping beside the erect, defiant figure of her companion. The pathos of the faded dress, the shoes too large and worn, the attitude and mournful beauty, almost flung him on his knees by her side; but the truth of Lucy's bitter words drove him onward. As she heard him going, Milly, scarcely understanding what had been said, and conscious only that Arthur and Lucy had had another quarrel, was rising to follow after, when Lucy drew her down, with a rude, angry hand.

"Stay here, you little fool!" she cried passionately. "He doesn't want you! Didn't you hear him say so!"



"Arthur never said that!" she cried, tearfully.

"Ask Jasper, then!" commanded Lucy.

She turned her quivering dark face to the boy, a flush on his brow.

"Did he, Jasper?" she asked, hoarsely.

"Yes, Milly, he said it," said Jasper, steadily.

"And he doesn't realize himself how much of it he means. And although he is Arthur Stanton, he is a cad!"

They had never heard the quiet boy so express himself, and Milly drew back, feeling more desolate than ever. Lucy was going away. Arthur did not want her, and Jasper was cross. Truly the storm was fast gathering over her defenseless head, and she knew not whither to fly for shelter.

"Lucy," said Jasper, out of a thoughtful silence, "please don't get offended, but why is it you always succeed in rousing the very worst there is in Arthur? He might never have come to the conviction that is now taking him to Sylva, if you had not dragged it out of his heart, and held it up for him to look upon."

"I suppose it is because I cannot help it," she said, slowly. "And yet I am glad I did, now that it is done. If he is a cad, I want to know it, and

I want him to know it too, and to know that I know it."

"But he won't look at it in that light. It is only right to him," said Jasper.

"Well, let him break his heart in doing what he thinks is right," she said. "It is—us he likes, not her."

"But there is Milly," he said softly, his eyes leaving her face. Following them, Lucy saw that Milly had left the spring, and was walking slowly across the playground to the little school on the other side of the road, in which she was to teach that afternoon. The narrow skirt of the faded dress just reached the shoetops. The form, too thin for her youth, was bowed from the waist, and the lank arms hung listlessly by her sides. The rich brown hair fell down her back in a heavy braid, for she had no pins to wear it in a more becoming fashion and suited to her age. The step was awkward because of the large shoes, and heavy because of the heart beneath the tight fitting bodice. The scorching tears crept up to Lucy's eyes as they took in the details of the figure, while memory supplied the growing sadness of the brown face. Why had she done this thing? Why had she wrung from

Arthur the admission of the difference between them, when Milly's poor flower of happiness must be crushed thereby? Even if she, Lucy, also suffered from it, she had other comforts, pretty dresses, a happy home, all but the thing she most wanted; while Milly had nothing, and now she had snatched from her the belief that she possessed this thing so precious to both. Why had she done this? Was it not, whispered a voice within, caused as much by jealousy of Milly as a desire to wound Arthur?

She half-arose to spring after the girl and cry out her sorrow, when Jasper's hand drew her gently back to her place.

"Let her alone!" he said. "She'll get over it sooner by herself. You don't understand her well enough, Lucy, to make amends."

After a moment he said:

"I am sorry, Lucy, you don't like to go to school—the convent school, I mean. You will have such chances there. I don't mean 'accomplishments!' " he added with a laugh, "but other things."

"What are they?" she asked, modified, and reflecting how much nicer than Arthur was Jasper Long.

"Drawing and painting, for one thing," he said.

"I shouldn't be surprised if at that school there would be an artist," he uttered the word with reverence, "to teach the pupils. And that is ever so much better than to work under one who has just studied it as a branch of knowledge—Miss Cora said so."

"But I don't care for drawing and painting," she complained. "I couldn't draw a straight line to save my life. And I'd much rather help Miss Cora teach the little children."

"I wonder why it is," said Jasper, "that the things people don't want are the things they have got to accept, while the things they do want go to other people who cannot appreciate them at half their value. Now if my father were to offer to send me where I could learn to be an artist—O Lucy!"

"And wouldn't he, if you were to ask him?" said Lucy, awed by the tragedy of Jasper's face. "He is as well off as my father, isn't he?"

"That makes no difference," he answered. "He'd never do it anyhow. He intends that I shall be a planter—a farmer I mean. He'd think I had gone crazy if I were to ask to study drawing and painting."

"But when you are a man," began Lucy.

"When I am a man I shall be less able to follow my inclinations than now," he interrupted.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because I shall have duties then," he explained.

"And duties, Lucy, are harder obstacles to get away from than your father's opposition to your plans for yourself when you are young."

"I shouldn't recognize any duty that stood between me and the thing I wished to do," cried Lucy.

"But I am not like you, Lucy," he said, and she knew there was regret in his voice, but instantly he added: "And there is as much happiness in doing your duty as in following your wishes, only it is different."

"And that difference makes a difference in the happiness," said Lucy suddenly, and before he had time to think of a reply, the school bell rang.

## CHAPTER VII

Lucy's experience at the boarding school fulfilled her predictions, with the single exception that she did not die. Of what she suffered, however, she said nothing, and neither teachers nor school-mates knew the anguish she daily endured. She had learned too early the unhappy lesson that, while the world is ready enough to share our joys, it is unresponsive to our sorrows; so deep in her young heart she hid that most pathetic of all griefs, the home-sickness of a child.

But it wrought a complete change in her, and the child who had led the games of the district school, whose voice rang the clearest in its laughter and who had impressed her personality upon her associates, now became silent and retiring, and only entered into the pleasures of the recreation hour when commanded to do so by her teachers. If she did not play, she studied. The mental occupation tended to absorb her mind, and she plunged into it for this purpose, at first, solely; then love succeeded,

and all the happiness Lucy Frazier found in her boarding-school days was that which study afforded.

The academy was a young one and passing through its days of poverty and privation, in which the pupils had a share. The severest of these to Lucy, as time progressed, was the scarcity of readable books in the library. Of devotional books there were a plenty, and pious stories outnumbered the ones dealing with love and adventure. As an alternative from this religious plethora, Lucy turned to history. The long row of books looked formidable to her, but she was not to be daunted, and began the story of the ancient kingdoms of Assyria and Egypt. Fortunately it was well-written and soon to the thoughtful child became absorbingly interesting. She was prepared for hero-worship when the historian led her into Greece, and Athens became more to her than Washington, and the character of her sons the standard of human worth.

If she could only have lived in those days, she mused, as she sat alone in the orchard, when the waning light of the brief spring day prevented her from following the record of the youthful period of our civilization. If it were in that happy time,

she mused, this gnarled tree against which she leaned her head might be the abode of a dryad, who, knowing her worshipful love, might deign to visit her; or a god or goddess might condescend to appear to her mortal eyes, and reward her devotion with the high gifts of which they were so lavish to their former favorites. Of course, the Sisters, over there praying devoutly in the chapel, would tell her her thoughts were all wrong. There were not, had never been, dryads and nymphs, mighty gods of war and peace and mightier goddesses to overthrow all schemes, mortal and divine. They were only the offsprings of an artistic but wholly pagan people, and to wish to exchange her time of Christian enlightenment and salvation for one of idolatrous gloom was sinful. Thus the gentle nuns would have said, as they probably would have withdrawn her books, had they been aware of her ideas. These, however, Lucy wisely kept to herself, and consequently was left to inhabit her beautiful world of imagination.

Suppose there were some truth in it, after all? she asked herself, with her blue eyes on the red sky. Suppose in that beautiful Grecian land, in that far-off golden time, these creatures, half hu-



man, half divine, lived their glad, free life, subject only to the higher gods? that they walked among men, unseen by them, ready to minister to their mortal brother's needs when mortal help was unavailing? Ah! one must have walked very circumspectly, she thought, in those days, feeling the many unseen eyes viewing all one's actions; and securely, too, for when necessity arose and earnest appeal to them had been made, it had never proven unavailing. And then the romance of those days, when the world was young and experience was new. Now—the book slipped unheeded to the ground while her arms clasped her updrawn knees, now, what was there? Then people fought for freedom for their glorious country; now they fought to liberate a lot of negroes. Then they led the conquered in their train, a glittering throng; now they degraded them by placing their former slaves over them in offices of authority. Then the hero could do anything he wanted, even to the cutting off of the tail of his dog, and be applauded; now he only maintained his place in popular esteem by behaving himself in the most orthodox fashion. Of course there was some romance left, and her mind turned lingeringly to the few novels on which the Sister Libra-

rian kept her key securely turned. But what Rome and Athens spared had been worn threadbare by the Crusaders, and only the ragged ends of it were left for those, not heirs of all the ages, in the opinion of this school girl, whose discontent with her enforced life of seclusion and wearing routine, had extended to the age in which she lived.

Except that the vacations sent her to the home she loved, it brought her little of joys belonging to her youth. The ties that had bound her to the young people of the neighborhood, had been loosened, if not severed, and as far as congenial companionship was concerned, she was no better at home than in the convent.

All things, however, end fortunately. The end of Lucy's school days sent her home with a gold medal hanging from her neck, and gladness in her heart. It was a gladness mixed with sorrow, not for the days she was leaving behind her, but because the sweetest portion of her life had been embittered, and by those who thought they were securing her greatest good. But youth soon reasserted itself, and the knowledge that she should no more suffer exile, together with the freedom of the country, succeeded in restoring her buoyancy, if it could not

entirely renew the old fawn-like wildness which had added more to the charm of her childhood than her grace and beauty. But the loss of that was a gain for these, and as she stepped across their threshold a few days after her return, Aunt Jenny and her old husband looked at her in dumb surprise and admiration.

"Yoh's shorely grow'd to be a p'tty gal, Lil'l Miss!" exclaimed the woman, the first to recover speech. Lucy blushed at the compliment, but turned it quickly aside by saying:

"Guess what I've brought you, all the way from the city, Aunt Jenny?"

"W'at's dat yoh's axin' an ole woman like me to do, Lil'l Miss?" she exclaimed, eying the packages in Lucy's arms exultantly. "It ain't evah a new dress, 'cause I don't need none, an' yoh Mammy give me a new aprun t'othah day."

"That is what it is—a new dress!" cried Lucy, and she deposited a package on the old woman's lap.

"Law, now, Lil'l Miss, how did yoh s'picion I wanted a new dress mos' thing on earth?" she exclaimed, nervously untying the string. "An' if t'aint a fine red cashmur! Law, Majah! jes' look

at dat! It's de fines dress I evah had in my life. Oh, yoh bressed chile! I'se gwian to have it med up to be berrud in!" and she clasped the girl to her heaving bosom and repeatedly kissed her fair face.

"Why Aunt Jenny!" she exclaimed, extricating herself from the smothering embrace. "If you say anything so grewsome as that, I'll take it back right away. You are going to have it made up to wear while you are alive. And here's your present, Uncle Major," she said, opening a box and disclosing a high hat for which, long ago, she had heard him express a wish.

"Lil'l Miss! Yoh's a congahur, shore!" he cried, delighted as a child. "Evah sense de day I los' my stove-pipe hat, dat ole Marse give me, when we wus runnin' 'way from de Morgan Men, I'se wanted anothah wuss'n anything on earth. But I nevah 'spected to git it, tell I climbed to de top uv Zion Hill."

"Did you expect to get it then?" asked Lucy, quietly bestowing a present upon the expectant General Joe Jerry, who was standing shyly at the door.

"Cose I does, Lil'l Miss," he answered, putting on the new hat. "Does yoh think de Lo'd's gwian

to have an ole bah-headed niggah walkin' up an' down dem golden streets? No'm! 'An' de fus' thing He's gwian to do when He sees Majah's ole wooly head boobin' 'foh de big white throne, is to odah one uv de ainguls to go an' buy him a stove-pipe hat, right 'way."

A laugh that was good to hear followed the words. The girl and the two old people turned quickly to see a young, fair-headed man standing on the log step, just outside the door. 'A' straw hat was in one hand, the other held a tin pail, which he now placed on the step. He did not speak, but stood looking on the surprised group, the laugh still on his face and in his eyes. These now met Lucy's and roved no more, until Aunt Jenny, all a-flutter, thrust her bulky form between the two, saying:

"Yoh's a-wantin' something, Marse A'thuh?"

"Just a bucket of water, but that will wait. I want to see Uncle Major's hat—and—Lil'l Miss."

The old negress did not move an inch out of his way, as she told him volubly he knew he could get all the water he wanted, without asking for it. He ignored her too evident desire for his departure, crossed the threshold and passing around her, said to the tall, white-robed girl:

"Did you bring home nothing for your white friends, not even a word of welcome, Lil'l Miss?" and again the pleasant laugh followed, while, hearing the old name spoken by him, the color ran riot over Lucy's ivory-tinted face. She held out her hand and greeted him, coldly, he would have thought, if it were not for the illumined countenance.

"Many of them," she said; "but my white friends must come for their presents."

Then, as if regretting her speech, she turned from him quickly, and telling Aunt Jenny she would find other things in the packages on the bed she announced her intention of starting for home. But once outside, she failed immediately to execute her intention, and, as she and Arthur lingered in the shadow of the tall pear tree, Aunt Jenny's brow grew heavy with misgiving.

"When did you get home?" he asked, and as his eyes went over the cameo beauty of the face, he found himself suddenly remembering the day he had kneeled above her as she lay where the sorrel colt had thrown her.

"Tuesday evening," she said, conscious of his eyes and a feeling of restiveness under them.

"And this is Thursday, and I never heard a breath of it! But that is not surprising, considering the way I live, since grandmother died."

"Mamma wrote me of her death. I was sorry for you. It must be very lonely there now—with nobody." Her voice went lamely over the words. She wanted to show her sympathy for him, thus bereft, but they sounded cold on her ears.

"It would be unendurable, if it were not for Milly," he said.

"Oh, yes, Milly!" she repeated. "How is she?" and then to Aunt Jenny's relief, she made a movement toward the path, now grass-grown, that led up the hill. He also stepped forward, and Lucy was conscious of a feeling of surprise and gladness, for never once during their childhood companionship had he turned his face toward her home.

"She is well," he rejoined, carelessly. "She teaches regularly now for Miss Cora in the little school-house. Do you remember when we used to do the teaching for her?"

"Yes," she said, and a little sigh caught at her heart.

"They were good old times," said Arthur, from the height of his five-and-twenty years. "But we didn't know it."

"I did," said Lucy, decisively. "I was never so happy in all my life as at Stanton school."

"Notwithstanding the fights?" he cried, and again his rich, full laughter filled her ears.

"They were the best part of it," she chimed, "especially when you were my opponent."

"You hated me pretty well," he said, looking at her reminiscently.

"And you returned the sentiment quite thoroughly," she retorted.

"It was what you expected and wanted, wasn't it?" he asked.

"Expected it—perhaps," she said.

"And wanted?" he urged.

"Does any one want to be hated?" she asked, turning her blue eyes wistfully upon him.

"But you said the best part of it was the quarreling with me," he observed. "We don't quarrel with people unless we hate them, and—"

"Oh, sometimes we do!" she said, interrupting him.

He shook his head disbelievingly. "I cannot agree with you," he said. "I never quarreled with Milly in all my life."

Lucy's laugh that followed was tinged with bitterness.



"That is because Milly would not quarrel with you—or any one," she explained. "She never even quarreled with her brother and sister. Where are they?"

"Oh, the sister married some one like herself, and the boy ran off. Her mother is in ill-health and her father would have a hard time of it, if it were not for Milly. Miss Cora got the trustees to allow her a salary for teaching, and that helps him out."

It was difficult to reconcile the indifference of his voice and manner in speaking of Milly, with his admission of his regard for her, and Lucy felt puzzled. It seemed to her that Milly was exhibiting unusual bravery and devotion in giving up her life to the parents whom the other children had forsaken; but her thoughts were interrupted by reaching the little brook which ran around the foot of the hill.

"I missed my bridge this morning," she said, as they stopped. "Uncle Major made it for me long ago, so 'Lil'l Miss wouldn't fall in an' git drowned.'"

"Lil'l Miss doesn't need the bridge now," he said, stepping across the brook, and reaching out his

hand to her. She took it and sprang across the silvery thread of water. Then once more they paused, and Arthur said:

"It must be nice to have nothing to do all day—a day like this!—but amuse yourself. See how different it is with me! I could not get anyone to help Milly's father with the clover hay, and so I had to turn farmer. My work in town is more profitable for me, but if he were to lose his part of the crop it would be a calamity. And so I must leave you now, and get back with that water I came after. Good-bye, Lil'l Miss," and again he laughed speaking the name, and sprang across the brook. "Oh, by the way," he cried, stopping and looking after her, "are you as fond of stories, as you used to be? or have you grown sentimental and gone in for Byron and Moore? Because if you are still fond of stories, I've got quite a collection of them now, and I'd like to take up our reading where we left off."

"We left off in the middle of the Leatherstocking tales," she called back to him, on her way up the hill. "Do you want to finish them?"

"Yes, don't you?" he called, and again his laugh filled her ears with its music. But she only laughed back at him.

To Lucy the meeting was quite an event, and under the memory of it and the influence of the Junetime of the year, she found her pessimistic views concerning the condition of present-day romance becoming modified. It might not be so entrancing as an encounter with young Alcibiades, with his fine scorn for public opinion, but unquestionably the meeting with Arthur was something to be recalled with pleasure, and its repetition something to look forward to.

He was just the same old Arthur, she told herself, with a swift stirring of the heart, as ready to quarrel and then laugh at it, as he had been in the days succeeding the fortunate ride on the sorrel colt. How manly he was, and how handsome and how good! To think of him stopping away from his law-office, and working in the hot field, in order to save the hay! Ah, but whose hay? whispered the little demon that is never far from the ear of the happy. If it had belonged to another than Milly's father, would he have made this sacrifice? And what had he said about the old house not being so lonely, because of Milly? And what could Milly do to drive away loneliness from the heart and home of Arthur Stanton? She could

not play, nor sing to suit his fastidious taste, and never had she been known to say a witty or clever word at school.

For Lucy had yet to learn that the deepest comfort allowed a human heart is to rest in the silence of a love, great enough to ask nothing in return, strong enough to hold itself ready for every demand made upon it, brave enough to withdraw when its presence is no longer needed, and pure enough not to see the wrong done it by its object. Such a love probably never has sufficed all the requirements of its object, but it is often the hand of God stretched out to it in the darkness. Often it goes disguised under the name of friendship, and when friendship is perfect, it must partake of the nature of this love. The instances of such a friendship are so rare, however, they have been immortalized; while such a love is an experience known to many. It was this love which, from the first, Milly had felt for Arthur, and now he found it as the deep heart of a forest is to a man worn by the heat of noonday.

When the unexpected death of his grandmother, coming immediately after his entrance upon his work as a lawyer, had left him alone at a time when

most he needed her companionship, it was to Milly, instead of his mother or other friends, he had turned. She could give him none of the things he had lost when his grandmother died. Her words of comfort would have irritated him, as her words of encouragement would have been meaningless. She simply offered him peace from the turmoil of life, and rest when labor was proving too severe. Though she never entered the house while he was there, he knew her hands were busy in his absence; for no servant would so look after his comfort. Her care, partaking largely of the maternal, made his loss less sharp, and the sense of her nearness took the edge from his loneliness.

He accepted it all unthinkingly. Had he ever stopped to ask why Milly should make herself all this to him, and been driven to accept its logical answer, Arthur Stanton would have abandoned the home of his fathers, rather than accept a service which he could not repay in kind. He was more considerate of his tenants than his neighbors were of theirs, but it was because they were deserving, he would have said had he been questioned on the matter. Besides this they had lived at his door for years, he had been a playmate to their children, and

he had ever seen his grandmother acting the part of a friend to them in their various troubles. Hence the meaning of his presence in the hay-field that day, that had caused Lucy so much concern.

But when he went back to the field, the thought of Lucy Frazier went with him, nor did he entirely get away from it all that day. When the evening shadows sent him down the long valley to the Hall, she seemed to walk beside him; and, as he passed it, he paused at the place she had lain that long past Sunday afternoon.

"What a daring creature she was to ride the unbroken colt!" he thought, continuing his walk, a smile on his lips. "She is the same Lucy, only prettier. She will cut a wide swathe, with her beauty and education, and her father's wealth back of her. Well, every dog must have his day, but, gentlemen! it's hard for the dogs, whose days are over!"

His head dropped somewhat, and, with his eyes on the ground, he went on until the stone wall separating the field from the orchard was reached. Then he looked up and saw Milly standing before the log house, the red light falling on her slight figure, and kindling the dark brown hair. He sent

her a pleasant greeting, and continued his slow walk to the Hall.

But that night, instead of his law-studies, the many new novels and works of the poets received his attention, and as he lingered with them, he wondered which one she would like, and would the vacation reading of their childhood ever be resumed.

With suspicious shrewdness Aunt Jenny noted that Arthur began to find a number of excuses for dropping in on her at unexpected times. She heaved a breath of relief when Lucy did not appear, and devoutly prayed that his frequent disappointments would cause him to abandon his visits, whose object she knew too well.

"Dah ain't no good gwian to come outer dah frien'ship," she reflected. "An' now dat old Mis' is dead, an' his muthah's done took up wif huh new husban' an' new chillun, I'se got to be keerful uv Marse A'thuh."

But Aunt Jenny's precautions, however, well fortified by prayer, proved unavailing against Major's championship. Arthur and Lucy were young; it was natural they should enjoy each other's society, and he resolved to lend a hand in obtaining this for them. Besides it afforded him a pleasure as natural

to frustrate his wife's schemes against the companionship of the two, which schemes he was convinced, lack masculine foresight. Lucy's father was getting rich, and his influence was increasing. An alliance with his daughter would place Arthur in a position which he might never attain by his own exertions; hence the best way he could prove his devotion to his old master's grandson was to bend every effort to bring this about.

Adroitly he gained Lucy's promise to accompany him on a certain day to the garden patch which her father had given him in one of the cornfields, to see the tomatoes which he was raising, and which he hoped would secure the premium at the county fair that fall. Then, under the cover of darkness, he sought the Hall, and on plea of needing some chewing tobacco gained admission to Arthur's study, and incidentally gave notice of the prospective excursion on the following morning. The cornfield joined the clear meadow, and though the hay was safe in the tall ricks, and pressing duties awaited him in town, Arthur found it necessary to be in that portion of his estate at that time. Seeing them, neighborliness demanded that he should join them, and share in her surprise and admiration over the



product of the garden plot, claimed by Major, but brought to its present state of growth by the industrious Joe. The inspection was soon over, and Lucy declaring she must return home, found herself abandoned by Uncle Major, who was employed with the weeds in the onion bed.

“G’long, Lil’l Miss!” he cried, waving his spare arm in response to her call. “I’s jus’ got to pull up dese weeds an’ he’p my po’r boy, now dat I’s down hyah. Reckun young Marse kin see yoh through de fiel’s an’ keep de snakes off’n yoh lil’l feet bettah’n de ole man!” and, as he watched Lucy turning petulantly away from him, and caught the smile on Arthur’s face, he chuckled to himself and said:

“De ole woman’ll be maddah’n a wet hen when she sees ’em a-coming down de hill, but ole Majah knows what he’s a-doin’.”

Lucy attempted to persuade Arthur that she was not afraid of snakes and could find her way out of the field quite easily, but he persisted in his intention to accompany her as far as the log house at least.

“But suppose I don’t want you?” she flashed, standing between the rows of Major’s prize tomatoes, the well-remembered light of battle in her blue eyes.

"But you do want me!" he retorted, a different light showing for an instant in his.

"Oh! do I?" she returned, coldly. "Come on, then!" and she whirled around and headed for the path, but not until he had caught the sudden red that flamed into her cheeks.

Up the grassy path that led between the old rail fence and the waving phalanx of the corn she went with feet so swift he was put to it to keep within arm's length of her. Seeing his opportunity slipping his grasp, he called out:

"O Lil'l Miss, look here!"

Safely beyond him, she paused and looked back over her shoulder.

"The mulberries are ripe, and I haven't eaten one for ages!" he cried, pointing toward the wide branches of a tree overspreading the path. She glanced from the tree to the speaker, and the penitent look on his face mollified her. After all, suddenly spoke up conscience, he had only told the truth.

"Neither have I!" she said, going back a few paces and watching him as he reached up a strong, brown hand for the bough.

"And you never saw them!" he observed, paus-

ing in his occupation to throw a reproachful glance at her. "That comes from being in such a hurry, and losing your temper—two bad things to do!"

"It's berries now—preaching afterward!" cried Lucy, who having caught hold of a branch, was busily engaged in picking the fruit.

"They don't taste quite as good as they used to, do you think so?" presently said Arthur, relinquishing his bough and looking at her as she stood on tip-toe eating the berries.

"Of course they don't!" she rejoined, smiling at him with juice-stained lips. "They are too easily gotten. If you had to climb for them, as you did then, you'd find them just as sweet. Or, if some one were to put a fence around this tree and warn you not to touch them, then you would think these tasteless mulberries finer than the grapes of—of—Oh, the place with the unpronounceable name!"

"So that's your philosophy!" he commented, looking at her intently.

"That's my philosophy!" she repeated, letting the branch go suddenly and sending down a shower of ripe berries. "What's wrong with it?"

Once more she turned to the path leading up the hill, but now her pace was slower, and he walked by her side.

"It's too cynical," he answered.

"But it is truth, nevertheless," she insisted.

"I wouldn't speak so certainly about what is truth," he remarked. "You remember Pilate's question?"

"Well?"

"And what is truth to one, is often error to another. You may hold a thing must be hard to obtain, or forbidden, to make it prized, while another would find such conditions militating against its desirability."

"The 'other' may exist," said Lucy, "but he is in such a small minority nobody ever heard of him. You see the truth of my philosophy everywhere proclaimed and admitted. Life always hangs her most desired gifts just a little out of reach, or sets fate between us and them."

"And again—Well?" he asked, repeating her question, as she paused thoughtfully.

"Each one must find the answer to that for himself," she said. "If one think it worth while, he strives or overmatches fate. If not, let him pass on, and suffer the loss!"

"But is it loss?" he insisted.

"How should I know every one's views on the subject?" she returned whimsically.

"But what do you think?" he asked.

"I don't think. Here are the bars!"

He laid down the bars, and offered her his hand. She pretended not to see it, and stepped lightly over the rails.

"That means, you know," he began, taking up the broken thread of the conversation, as they strolled down the hill toward the log house, at whose doorway stood the astonished mistress. When she said nothing, he added: "And I can't understand how you get such knowledge—so young."

"Then I'll enlighten you!" she said, suddenly. "I studied history."

They walked on in silence until half the way to the valley was covered; then she broke it by asking:

"How does it happen you are not in town to-day?"

He started guiltily and the warmth showed on his brow, but instantly he gave her a plausible answer.

Twice through the efforts of Major, the accidental meeting was repeated, and when again Aunt Jenny saw Arthur strolling up the valley, on the morning Lucy had come down with her mother's seamstress

to fit the red cashmere dress which was being made for her in Mrs. Frazier's sewing-room, her suspicions became certainties, and she threw a wrathful glance at her husband, carefully placing a coal of fire in his cup of drinking-water. She could say nothing before the stranger and waited her opportunity. It came the day Lucy brought home the new dress.

"Yes, Lil'l Miss, it's pretty as a picture, but yoh ole Aunt Jenny aint got no heart foh sech foolishness no moh," and she hid her face in her apron and began to rock to and fro.

Lucy was at first touched and then alarmed. Drawing down the apron, she besought the old woman to tell her the cause of her trouble.

"If I do, yoh'll git mad, an' go 'way an' nevah come back no moh. An' yit I'se jus' got to do it, foh yoh's a po's innercent lil'l chile an' don't know what wicketness is; an though I loves yoh moh'n anything top uv de earth, I'd ruthah hyah yoh say, 'Good-bye, Aun' Jenny, yoh'll nevah see Lil'l Miss no moh!' den foh yoh to go on bein' 'posed on by de wickit."

"Aunt Jenny, what are you talking about?" cried the girl. "Who is the wicked one who is imposing on me?"

"I ain't evah gwian to blab, Lil'l Miss! Not dat dey don't 'serb it—wuss'n dat! Foh yoh's a inner-cent lil'l chile, an' when Marse A'thuh he say he jus' happent 'long to met yoh, it ain't evah popped into yoh head, dat he's knowd all erlong whah's yoh gwian to be, an come up uv pu'pose. An' yoh don't evah think dat yoh an' him ain't lil'l boy an' gal no moh, an' dat young ladies an' gen'lmen, dey sees each othah in de pahlah."

Lucy did not move from her place by the old woman's side, but her cheeks went white as the dress she wore. The fading eyes saw it and caught the scorn that leaped into the blue ones meeting hers. It was for her old master's grandson, the last of a race of gentlemen, she remembered; and love and loyalty drove her to the defense.

"An' Marse A'thuh, he's young, too, an' he don't think what he's doin', an' he wouldn't do it, if some dat oughter know bettah wahn't aiggin' him on. When he heahs Lil'l Miss is gwian to be somewah, he thinks he'll be dah too, an' have a nice talk wif huh; foh he ain't got no woman-folks to talk wif sence his gran' muthah died, 'cause dat po'r gal what's a-livin' in de ya'd, she don't know how to talk to Marse A'thuh moh'n a chile. He sets a

stoh by what yoh say, Lil'l Miss, an' so don't yo go a-hatin' uv him; 'cause he don't 'think. A' good many uv de Stantons, dey didn't think, an' he's mightly like some uv 'em."

As soon as she could, Lucy left the house, and as she climbed the hill, she kept repeating to herself.

"Aunt Jenny is right. He does not think. He never did." And over her brain beat the words of the poet: "He deserves to find himself deceived, who seeks a heart in the unthinking man."

As the days passed and Lucy came no more to see her, the wrath of the old woman increased against her husband and Arthur. It overleaped the barriers of her respect one evening, and Arthur, who had come to engage Joe to assist Milly's father with the plowing, left with some words stinging his ears; while Major, knowing now the reason of Lucy's continued absence, realized that when age undertakes to assist youth, it usually bungles.

'Arthur strode home, his angry passions aroused, but against whom he could not say. He knew Lucy had only done what he expected her to do in resenting his intrusion, and her scorn of him in taking advantage of his knowledge of her whereabouts he



richly deserved. But, with the inconsistency of human nature, the fact of her feeling thus against him, rankled in his heart. He should like to have flung back her scorn, and told her she flattered herself in thinking he would take the trouble to seek her, which she accredited to him; and prove to her that she showed the shallowness of the ordinary feminine mind in so readily accepting a negro's suspicions as truth. But his bitter thoughts, he soon realized, only tortured himself; so leaving them, he plunged into the reading, which he had of late neglected.

Morning found him in a more rational mood, and, as the day grew older, between his study of his clients' affairs would intrude the misery of Aunt Jenny, from whom, she declared, he had driven her "Lil'l Miss." Always the sorrow of the aged appealed most directly to him, for they, he reflected, had endured so much and so long; and the pathos of the old negro's loneliness almost drove him to commit the supreme folly of writing to Lucy and apologizing for his intrusion and promising its discontinuance. As time passed, however, he sharply began to realize how much the prospect of seeing Lucy had meant to him; and his regret

for Aunt Jenny was shared with himself. As familiar as an oft-walked path grew the memory of the few occasions they had met, and her remembered looks and words and gestures became more real than the objects upon which he gazed. She had seemed to enjoy his company too, and, as he fancied she might be lonely as himself for the companionship denied, the edge of his pain lost some of its sharpness.

Her philosophy was proving its truth in his own experience, and the forbidden was becoming the desirable; for Lucy was the forbidden to Arthur Stanton, and the fate which had decreed it, was his own unbendable pride. The road to her father's home lay open to him but he had never traveled it, and never could, he told himself, although at the end of it stood Lucy, whose friendship meant all to his lonely heart. Why could she not have been some one else? or why could not another girl of his acquaintance have her enthralling beauty, her congenial mind? Had she been Sylva whom he so often visited, or Milly, who waited on his mood! Had she been she would not have been Lucy Frazier whom he might not see; and again the truth of her careless words was driven into his soul.

Time was allowed for his thoughts to return to their normal condition before they again met. On this occasion their meeting was purely accidental. He could not have known that she had ridden into the town at a moment's notice to make a necessary household purchase; nor was she going to blame him because, seeing her on his way home, he made haste to join her. Each strove to meet the other nonchalantly, but the consciousness of mutual knowledge would not be ignored, and their souls looked out upon each other in full admission of all that had occurred. The momentary silence was embarrassing; then Arthur said:

"Aunt Jenny misses you, Lucy."

"I will go to see her tomorrow," said Lucy; and then the marvel of their perfect understanding broke upon them.

"What have you been doing?" he asked.

"Reading more history!" she flashed back, and then both laughed. The laugh brought them to one level more quickly than many words of explanation could have done, and during the remainder of the ride together it was as if the past were not. As they reached her father's gate, he said:

"Have you heard of the croquet party with

which Miss Cora intends to close her school next week?"

"Yes," she answered. "Miss Cora sent me an invitation to attend."

"Are you going?"

"What a question!" she exclaimed. "As if I could refuse Miss Cora's invitation!"

"I was going to do so, but if you will be there, so shall I. I want to defeat you again at the old school," and as he spoke he laughed, so pleasant was the anticipation of being with her for a whole afternoon.

"Again?" said Lucy, slightly elevating her eyebrows.

"Yes, again!" he retorted. "I did defeat you once, Lucy, completely, overwhelmingly—that day I apologized!"

An electric silence followed; then Arthur impulsively leaned toward her, and placing a hand on the horn of her saddle, said, in a voice muffled by his emotions:

"Lucy, have you ever forgiven me for—for what made the apology necessary?"

"No!" she said, suddenly drawing her horse away; "and never shall, until"—

"Until what?" he demanded, his eyes meeting hers with an intensity that appeared to draw their secret from them.

"Yes, dear, open the gate!" she said, quickly turning her face from his eyes to her little brother, who had run down to meet her. "Good-bye!" she called back to Arthur as the gate swung open and her impatient horse started up the drive.

## CHAPTER VIII

LIFE looked fair and desirable to Lucy Frazier that June afternoon, as she strolled down the smooth white turnpike to the little gray school-house nestling among the hills. Across the road from it a shelf of land spread out from the foot of the hill to the shallow stream, known as Dalton Run, now dry, except for occasional pools, over which the bright mailed dragon flies and tiny, blue-winged butterflies drifted. This level bit of turf had received considerable attention from the older pupils during the past week, and it now presented an ideal appearance for a croquet ground.

As Lucy came in sight, a cry of welcome and the waving of many handkerchiefs showed her she was expected and awaited. Her quickened steps soon brought her to the door, where Miss Cora, her eyes filled with tender affection, stood to give her greeting. The old schoolmates, the girls effusively, the boys distinctly, repeated the teacher's

welcome. She missed one, however, and on inquiring for Sylva, Jasper, with the slow smile in his eyes, answered that there were other fashionables in the neighborhood beside herself. A word battle ensued, and again Miss Cora, as in the past, had to settle it.

"I see," she said, "I must fall back on the old plan and set you contentious children to work. Boys, those croquet boxes are for you! Girls, the lunch baskets are your charge!"

"But, Miss Cora," objected Milly, "Sylva will not like it if we do not wait for her."

"I never held back my classes for the tardy," observed Miss Cora, with her pleasant little laugh, "and I am too old to make any change in my methods now. My invitations read 'two o'clock.' It's that time now; proceed, children!"

As the old command fell upon her ears, a sudden tenderness overpowered Lucy, and yielding to it, she impulsively flung her arms around the teacher's neck and kissed the soft fair cheek, as she cried:

"Oh, Miss Cora! I have not been so happy since I left here as I am today! It is so good to be back, if only for a few hours, isn't it?" she finished, turning to her companions, half apologetically.

"You might share your rapture with others besides Miss Cora," said Arthur, a teasing gleam in his eyes.

"I might of course," she said, slowly, "but I won't."

"Oh, do, Lucy!" cried Jasper. "Nobody has flung her arms around my neck since"—

"Since the day Milly did, when you risked your life to rescue the little bird that had fallen into raging Dalton Run!" exclaimed Lucy.

"You forget the day Sylva thought Mr. Raymond's black dog was a bear springing out of the thicket upon us, when we were gathering violets," said Jasper, but the grey that suddenly showed on his face belied the light voice.

"She couldn't remember it since it occurred after she left here," observed Arthur, and then Miss Cora, having gotten her present pupils into line, ordered her former ones to obey her injunction and start for the picnic ground.

But while the light words had been passing between her and her former companions, Lucy's eyes were busy reading what the years of separation had written on their faces. Miss Cora she found unchanged, but not so her young assistant.



Youth was dealing with Milly more gently than childhood had done, and while the figure lacked Lucy's grace, which was as much the result of cultivation as nature, it was symmetrical, and there was a lithe suppleness in her tread that was suggestive of mystery, which seemed to find a confirmation in the gloomy beauty of the eyes. Those eyes were so dark one had to look at them twice to assure one's self they were not black, and they looked out from a face, which, too thin and pale to accord with the canons of beauty, was yet haunting, enthralling, because so unusual. All about her hung the air of mystery, but when she spoke it was instantly dispelled. She had the transparency of a dewdrop, and its depth. Either nature had placed the wrong soul in the carefully fashioned mould, or she had made Milly in one of her ironical moods, and henceforth stood by smiling at her handiwork.

Jasper had fulfilled all the promises of his boyhood, and, as Lucy looked at the tall, manly figure, crowned by the shapely head, with its finely featured face and tender, dreamy eyes, she had no difficulty in recognizing the friend of childhood days. His pleasure at meeting her was so honest,

so wholehearted, that, in spite of herself, she contrasted it with Arthur's welcome, partaking, as it did, of certain condescension that would have been intolerable in another.

It was to Milly, however, Lucy found her eyes most frequently turning—the girl who stood between Arthur Stanton and loneliness. As the first surprise of her strange beauty wore away, she questioned what he could find in her to fill his grandmother's place, where lay her power to soothe a nature as complexly organized as the one possessed by the last of the Stantons of the Hall. These thoughts, which were carried on while she gaily conversed with her friends, were suddenly interrupted by Arthur saying:

“Lo, the Lady Sylva at last! Ah, but we are coming in glory! Some one must act the cavalier to her ladyship—will you, Jasper?”

“Your attentions are more acceptable to her ladyship,” observed he, bowing mockingly to Arthur, “and I am more pleasantly engaged,” he added, smiling into Lucy's eyes, that rested for a moment on his, before passing across the creek to the road, where sat Sylva in a stylish turnout, with a liveried negro on the seat beside her. For

all his reluctance before them, it seemed to Lucy that Arthur went quickly to her side, and his bow to the haughty little bit of femininity was in some way different from that made before her earlier in the afternoon.

“Will you be my partner, Lucy?” asked Jasper.

The words brought back her eyes and her thoughts, and she experienced a sudden gladness, seeing Jasper.

“Yes,” she agreed. “Which color?”

“Blue,” he said promptly, looking smilingly into her eyes. “I shall surely win then.”

“Does blue always win?” she asked.

“I have never known it to fail—in the hands of a dextrous player,” he replied. Then he heard his name called, and they turned to see Arthur assisting Sylva across the creek, as he said:

“Jasper, bring Lucy here! Sylva is dying to meet her!”

“Come! come!” he said in a low voice. “Let us hasten to save Sylva’s life!” and then both laughed.

With the laugh lingering on her lips and bringing out the radiant beauty of her face, Lucy turned with him to meet Sylva. She saw a pretty,

petite, stylish young lady, and as Lucy took in the dainty picture, she found herself thinking, "What a fussy old woman she will make!" Lucy extended her hand cordially and would have kissed her former playmate, had not her friendliness been chilled by receiving only the tip of the gloved fingers.

"Oh, Miss Frazier! I am charmed to see you!" she chirped. "Does it not seem perfectly natural for us to be here together again? Ah, those happy days of childhood! Why could they not last?"

"And does not a meeting like this make amends?" quoted Lucy, while Jasper hastened to say:

"The group is not complete, Sylva. Milly was always with us then," and his eyes sought the young teacher, who was arranging a game of blind man's buff for the smaller pupils.

"I thought you had grown sentimental, now I know it," said Arthur, looking at Lucy.

"Must one be sentimental to quote a poet?" asked Lucy.

"To quote some poets—yes," he rejoined.

"I plead guilty—is that correct?—to reading Moore. I smuggled him into the convent one day

when my father came to see me, and hid him under a pile of dry leaves in the orchard, where the Sisters used to permit me to go to read—history,” and at her slight emphasis on the word, Arthur suddenly recollected some things which he would rather forget. “When winter set in and I could not go to the orchard, do you know what I did with the book?”

“Hid it under the mattress,” suggested Jasper.

“As if I would do a thing so simple!” she exclaimed. “I slipped it behind the row of histories on the library shelf, and read ‘Lallah Rookh’ under the Sister Librarian’s eyes. They thought because I read history I was perfectly safe. Unfortunately I like poetry also.”

“And didn’t they allow you to read poetry in the convent?” asked Sylva, opening her eyes in feigned astonishment.

“Not me—then,” replied Lucy carelessly. “They thought I was too young, but you know it is a failing of mine to disagree with the opinions of others. I think Miss Cora wants the game to begin,” she concluded, and turned to Jasper, leaving Arthur, somewhat disconcerted, to escort Sylva.

"Miss Frazier has become quite pretty, don't you think so?" piped Sylva, as they followed.

"Become pretty?" ejaculated Arthur, but as he glanced down at the young lady beside him, the folly of attempting to change her conviction occurred to him, and he said instead, "Quite!" and inquired for her mother.

"Poor mamma is suffering from another attack of neuralgia," she said, "otherwise she would be with me today. She didn't want me to come alone, but I told her it was such a simple little affair, I did not need a chaperon."

"It would have been rather dull for your mother, since she does not play," observed Arthur, suddenly finding himself possessed of an uncontrollable desire to stalk on ahead and take Lucy Frazier from Jasper's side.

"Oh, she would have enjoyed talking to Miss Cora and Milly about the school," said Sylva, indifferently.

"Milly?" he questioned. "Why Milly is going to play croquet with us."

"Why Arthur Stanton? What do you mean?" she cried, her little face paling.

"What I said," he rejoined.

"Then I shall not!" she said, decisively.

"Oh, yes you will!" he returned quietly. "You are going to be my partner."

"But I tell you I will not," she said, although her voice was not so decisive.

"You came here on Miss Cora's invitation; do you intend to offer her an insult?" he asked, coldly.

"And insult her you will if you refuse to play croquet because her assistant is in the game."

"But Milly will not be in it unless you insist upon it," she urged.

"And that is what I intend doing," he replied; and, as they reached Miss Cora, he left her and went to where Milly stood, with her young charges.

"We are ready to begin, Milly," he said. "Come on!"

"But I did not intend playing, Arthur," she pleaded; her eyes instinctively passing to Sylva, in her elaborate toilet, and then resting on Lucy, more simply, but not the less well gowned.

"And I intend that you shall," he said, quietly. "Come on, they are waiting for us."

Reluctantly Milly went forward, and because Miss Cora still exercised over her the fear of her authority, Sylva dared not utter a word of demur.

She soon, however, complained of fatigue, which possibly she really experienced, hampered as she was by tight corsets, and shoes, and a gown that required more attention than the elusive balls. As she seated herself at the foot of one of the old sycamores that threw their grateful shadows over the playground, she was joined by one of Miss Cora's nephews, who had long worshipped at her shrine. He realized with the shrewdness that was distinguishing him in business ventures all that an alliance with her family would mean to him; but until this afternoon she had scarcely more than returned his respectful salute as they passed on the street. Now he stood between her and the humiliation of sitting alone or continuing a game which was equally humiliating to her social instincts.

Young Philip Austin held much of his sensible aunt's contempt for caste distinctions, and he promptly laughed at her when Sylva spoke derisively of the present democratic assemblage; and, when her next words gave him to understand that he was included in her catalogue of those outside of her circle, he casually reminded her that the Austins had come to Kentucky with the Daltons, and that in Virginia from which they



both hailed, the families had long been united by marriage and social interests.

"It won't do, Miss Sylva," he laughed, "to entertain such notions in these days. You know as well as I do that Mr. Frazier is forging to the front everywhere, especially since he opened the new bank, and succeeded in getting the railroad to run through the town. They say he will enter the race for the Legislature, and if he once gets into politics he may not stop until he becomes Governor."

"A Yankee Governor of Kentucky!" cried Sylva, shuddering.

"He is no more a Yankee than you are!" he returned. "His father was a Scotchman and of good old family, more prominent in their country than the Daltons ever were in this. You can not call his son a Yankee, because he happened to be born in the North. He did not fight in the Union ranks, and he has voted the Democratic ticket all his life."

"I don't believe it!" she said, bluntly. "He turned Democrat when he came down here. What do we know of him or what he was before coming to Kentucky?"

"O nonsense, Miss Sylva! Men don't change

politics as quickly as women their friends. Every one knows where Mr. Frazier came from, and, if you wish to find out his history, all you have to do is to write to some one in his home place."

"What do you think I care about him—who or what he was or is!" she exclaimed, the curl on her aristocratic red lips.

"Nothing, I dare say," he rejoined, carelessly. "But when you make false charges against one of my father's friends, I must set you right. Did you hear," he added, "that Judge and Mrs. Devon invited Lucy to go with them and Stella to White Sulphur Springs this summer?"

Sylva gasped, for in the little town, which was the social center of the community, the Devons were the leaders. She gave no expression to her surprise, however, beyond the unavoidable silence; then she observed:

"I wonder what they see in her!"

"A great deal, it seems," he rejoined. "Lucy is going to give a party for Stella before she leaves."

"Did Lucy accept the invitation?" asked Sylva, curiosity getting the better of contempt.

"No, she said she did not think she should leave her parents this summer, having been absent so

long at school. Quite a nice thing for her to do, I think."

"How virtuous!" she exclaimed. "Any one with discernment would know it is because she is ashamed of her lowly origin and lack of social training. If she were to find herself among the elite she would be made to realize the difference too sharply for her pride. My mother used to go to White Sulphur Springs, and I know that the most exclusive people of the South are to be found there."

"As Mrs. Devon's guest Lucy would take her place among them," he insisted, "and I don't suppose so many of the old Southern families go there now. They are like the rest of us, Miss Sylva, too poor to leave home."

"And you can like these Yankees. after all they have done to us?" she cried, the tears of mortification in her eyes.

"There are no Yankees, no Rebels any longer, Miss Sylva," he said. "We are all one now."

"We are not! Will never be!" she cried. "And you ought to be ashamed of yourself to say it, when your father and all your kindred fought for the South. If there is one on earth I do abhor, it is a traitor!"

"Don't you abhor a Yankee?" he asked.

"Of course I do!" she rejoined.

"Then you abhor two instead of one," he said, but his laugh was so pleasant, she only tossed her head, mentally saying that Phil Austin was fairly good company.

"Whom else do you abhor besides me and the Yankees?" he questioned, noting his advantage.

"I didn't say I abhorred you," she said, coquettishly, giving him a glance from the tail of her eye.

"Oh, I am awfully glad you don't—quite!" he cried. "To prove my gratitude, let me say I know where Aunt Cora has left the daintiest of lunch baskets, and since these good people insist on delaying their own luncheon for the folly of chasing an army of painted balls over a five acre field, I propose that you and I make ourselves acquainted with the contents of the aforesaid basket; afterward, I shall gather you a wreath of wild roses and crown you queen of the Stanton school picnic. What do you say? Please let it be yes."

Sylva gave a fleeting thought of her prudish mother, who had spent her natural life in "preaching down a daughter's heart;" to Arthur, absorbed

in his desire to defeat Lucy Frazier; and then youth triumphed, and for once Sylva Dalton took life into her own hands and drew from it some natural enjoyment.

The nearness of the delectable lunch basket to its all-perceiving guardian, prompted them to seek a distant place for its enjoyment. Screened by the row of elders that made a white and green fringe to the robe of the hill, they wandered on, until the passing of the ridge hid the players and brought them to a company of tall hickories, whose shade was inviting to the fugitives. Seated on the grass, the luncheon spread on a cloth of elder leaves, they partook of it, and then, with the unselfishness that distinguishes us in our disposal of the property of others, they left the remainder of the feast for the birds and such animals as would regale themselves on the food prepared by their brother man.

"I feel equal to climbing the hill, now, don't you?" he questioned. "I know up there we shall find wild roses, and I wish to pluck a garland for you, my lady! Come!"

Up they went, laughing and talking, unconscious of the bewilderment their absence was causing their companions, now seated around the picnic dinner.

When finally they came down the hill together they found the party on the eve of breaking up. For her own part of the company it seemed to the sharp-sighted girl not to have been wholly a satisfactory one; and she shrewdly guessed of the passage-at-arms between Arthur and Jasper, by their studied politeness toward each other. Milly's discomfort was painfully apparent, and the wicked light in Lucy's blue eyes was self-explanatory. The boys had been disagreeing, and Lucy had been primarily the cause of it.

"She always brought disturbance among us," communed Sylva, as she made her brief farewells to Miss Cora and her guests, and then, still accompanied by Phil Austin, crossed to where the patient negro awaited her coming.

The preparation for departure left Lucy and Arthur alone for a moment the first time that afternoon.

"Aren't congratulations in order, Lil'l Miss?" he asked, with the light mocking inflection in his voice, a tone she perceived he kept for her alone.

"For what?" she inquired indifferently, lifting the drooping heads of the flowers she wore at her belt.

"For your success—in playing croquet," he rejoined.

"I warned you I would defeat you," she said.

"Doesn't your partner deserve some credit also?" he interrogated. "I have never seen Jasper play so well and behave so rudely."

"And I suppose both facts are due to his partner?" she flashed.

"Not both," he said, and he smiled. She made no rejoinder. Her silence piqued him.

"Don't you want to know for which your partner deserves credit?" he asked.

"Not sufficiently to inquire," she rejoined carelessly. "But your poor playing and equally bad manners can be accredited to no one but yourself."

"It is refreshing to get an opinion unsolicited," he observed.

"Instead of leaving it to be inferred," she retorted. For an instant the angry flash of the blue eyes of the speaker brought an answering light into the ones upon which they were bent; then the young man looked across the field to where the noisy children were forming into a line under the direction of the younger teacher. As he saw Milly it occurred to him that he might have

been more successful with the mallet had he had another partner, since she knew but little of the game. And she had not enjoyed herself at all, so conscious was she of her defect. And he had given his friend Sylva offense by forcing upon her the undesired company of his tenant's daughter. Altogether he had only himself to blame, and there was no need making matters worse by further antagonizing Lucy. He turned to her with anger gone from his eyes.

"And the opinion is correct," he said, with his sunny smile, and Lucy suddenly remembered the day he had apologized to her in the school. "It is singular," he continued, "the way certain circumstances will fall together to bring up the worst in us! One would think there were a conspiracy among them for that purpose. Have you ever thought about such things?" he finished, looking at her with eyes the clearer for the anger they had lately shown.

"No," said Lucy, feeling something within her rising as if to enfold those swiftly cleared eyes.

"It is interesting, to me, at least. I've often puzzled long over it. Is there something in us that attracts those circumstances to us? or are they



the natural result of the encounter of opposite characters? Now, if we had exchanged partners, would Jasper and I have found so much to antagonize us this afternoon?"

"Or if you had played against Sylva instead of me," she suggested, with mock humility. "I was always the disturbing element—Miss Cora used to say as much."

"But disturbing elements are good," said Jasper, who had joined them unobserved. "They change the entire atmosphere, lift us out of ourselves. And here is your parasol, and may I have the pleasure of seeing you home?"

In a few moments more they were sauntering up the white road together in the wake of a crowd of glad-hearted children, among whom were Lucy's brother and sister. Arthur followed at a distance that precluded the thought of any wish to join them. His step was slow, and his eyes were bent on the ground. Once, before reaching the bend in the road, Lucy looked back for a last glimpse of the old school, she said; but seeing instead the thoughtful walker, she turned quickly and went for a little way in silence.

At the gate that separated the lane leading to

the Hall from the main road, Arthur paused, and for a full moment gazed after the pair, and the old, mastering desire to go forward and take Jasper's place by the girl's side held him fiercely. He broke from it, wondering at himself. Let Jasper walk home with Lucy Frazier, for assuredly he would not, were she ten times as fair, said pride; and desire, shorn of its strength, departed. He withdrew his eyes and let them drift idly down the road to the little school-house. The mystic light of the June evening was enfolding the land, and under it the familiar scenes took on an aspect of helplessness for the gazer, and in that helplessness he perceived that he and all the others were included. The night, hiding the sunset sky, might bring to the still valley and wooded hills and yonder little temple of learning none knew what tempests, and dangers as great and unavoidable might lurk for him and his companions of the afternoon within the securely folded cloak of the future. As the thought held his mind, the school door opened, and Milly stepped out upon the little wooden platform. She paused for a moment, her face turned to the hills, then she went down the steps across the yard, and, with her lithe, long

strides, came swiftly toward the gate by which he stood waiting for her. He held it open for her, and after a few remarks concerning the afternoon's event, they walked on in the deep silence of nature and their own hearts, until their steps brought them to the Hall, which he entered, and she passed around to her humble home.

## CHAPTER IX

MRS. FRAZIER'S invitations were the first intimation the community received of her intention to claim for her daughter a place in the society which she had never asked for herself. Among those who considered this a crowning piece of Yankee impertinence was Mrs. Dalton, who declared she for one would refuse that claim. When, however, Sylva repeated to her the information conveyed by young Austin, she modified her speech. No one could afford to ignore Mrs. Devon, while the Judge and her husband had long been warm friends. When the fortunes of war had made a mortgage on the plantation necessary, it was the Judge who had supplied the money, and remembering that half of it was still unpaid, and release from the debt as far off as ever, she shuddered at what might have resulted had Sylva not been able to put her on her guard against offending the friends of his wife and daughter. The interest taken by Mrs. Devon in Lucy Frazier was no

mystery to Mrs. Dalton, who knew that the Judge's wife claimed the North as her birthplace. On sectional feeling was builded this friendship for the Fraziers, although she doubted not it was cemented by her husband's political interests.

Arthur, however, was bound by no such personal considerations, and yet long after Mrs. Dalton had settled the matter satisfactorily for herself, he hesitated. Courtesy, policy, his own strong inclinations, prompted him to follow Mrs. Dalton's example, but pride stood over against these and forbade it. He could never set foot across the threshold of the intruder, though his dearest interests were to suffer by the refusal. The thoughts of Lucy pleaded against that decision. They reached out to him tender, imploring hands. For none would there be sweeter welcome than for him. The old lines were forever taken down, and the ancient dwellers on the land and the latest comer into it, stood on the same level. They had not dishonestly acquired their possessions, argued heart and head, and the money paid by them had helped the planters to hold their footing. If Frazier had not been here to buy his land, his grandmother might not have ended her days in

comparative ease and plenty, and he might not still find himself in the home his fathers had founded. It was the fortunes of war, and why could he not accept it in the philosophic spirit of his neighbors? And it was to Lucy's home he should go—Lucy, with the tender blue eyes and the tender girl's heart—Lucy who might do with men what she would, were she not too true to stoop to the wiles her sex permitted.

Thus they pleaded, and half yielding to them he would take up his pen to send his acceptance to the invitation. But the act set him free from the chains of feeling, and the pen would drop from his fingers. In such a mood he went forth one evening, intending to fight the battle of indecision to the finish. Passing through the orchard, he saw Milly walking down the path, and as they came toward each other, he thought how perfectly the starlight harmonized with her peculiar beauty.

"I have been up to Aunt Jenny's" she said, for it was part of her life to tell him all things. "I wanted Joe to take a note to Lucy."

"I could have spared you the walk, if I had known it," he said, instantly deciding he, too, would go up to the old log house.

"Mrs. Frazier is going to give a big party," explained Milly, "and she sent me an invitation. In it was a note from Lucy saying she would look for me, and I must not disappoint her. That was sweet in Lucy—so like her!" she added softly.

"And you will not disappoint her?" asked Arthur, surprised at the interest with which he awaited her answer.

"It won't really be a disappointment for her," said Milly, unconsciously emphasizing the last word.

"No," he said, suddenly. "She won't really miss either of us, but it suits her fancy to lead us to believe she will."

"O, Arthur!" she exclaimed. "She will be disappointed if you are not there."

He laughed at her words, and then passed on, but his heart had grown warmer hearing them.

"She is true blue!" he cried to himself, thinking of Lucy. "No fear of her forgetting an acquaintance who chances to be poor and lowly."

Then the thought came to him: "If Lucy and I were to exchange places, what would she do in the matter?" Yes, what would Lucy, not less proud than himself, do if she stood in his position? He tried to imagine her sending his stereotyped words

of refusal, but the picture did not show true of the girl he knew. He thought that in such a conflict in Lucy's heart, pride would lose to affection, because of her high truth. The thought drove him on, until, almost unconsciously, he came upon the log cabin, before which sat Uncle Major, wrapped in his long blue cloak.

"Good evening, Uncle Major!" he said.

"G'd evenin', Marst A'thuh, g'd evenin'!" he answered. "When I fus' seed yoh, I thought mebbe 'twar a ghost comin' up de holler."

"I almost forgot that we want Joe down at the house the first thing in the morning," said Arthur, wondering what employment he would give the willing boy when he came.

"He can't come de fus thing," rejoined the old man, "'kase he's got to go up to Mis' Frazur's wif a note from Miss Milly. She jus' fotched it up."

"Yes, I met Miss Milly on my way here, and she told me she had written declining the invitation to the big party," he answered carelessly, but knowing he was waiting for the rejoinder.

"Is dat what's in it?" he exclaimed. "It bothered me so I couldn't sleep, an' so I med Joe rize up an' go to de spring to fotch me a drink uv cool wattah."



"Now you can sleep without waiting for the water," said Arthur, with his full laugh. "It was nice of Lil'l Miss to remember her poor friends," he observed. "But then rich people can afford to do nice things."

"Po'r ur rich, it'd be de same wif Lil'l Miss!" exclaimed the old negro, loyally. "Munny don't mek no diffrence wif dat bressed chile!"

"I'll warrant, Uncle Major," he began, "if Lucy were poor and she had a rich friend, and that friend would ask her to do something that would give that friend pleasure, and which Lucy herself would like to do if she were not poor, her pride would step in and say: 'No, you can not do this.' Your Lil'l Miss is as proud as Lucifer, Uncle Major."

"Much yoh knows 'bout Lil'l Miss, ef yoh kin talk dat uv huh!" he exclaimed. "Lil'l Miss is got de right so't uv pride, an' dat don't evah come in 'twixt frien's, Marse A'thuh. An' if dey war friends, 'stead uv jus' knowin' each othah kase dey went to skule togethuh, an' Lil'l Miss war po'r, an' Miss Milly rich, an' Miss Milly sot huh pa'ty, Lil'l Miss wouldn't evah stop to think she ain't got no munny an' fine cloe's, but she jus' thinks huh frien' wants huh, an' she gits ready an' goes. Dat's Lil'l

Miss! Proud 'nough when she oughter to, but nobody has any right to be proud wif frien's, kase when people's frien's, Marse A'thuh, deys come to one level."

"You're prejudiced in favor of Lil'l Miss," said the young man, laughingly, for into his heart a wonderful change had come, hearing the old negro's words. "With you, Lil'l Miss can do no wrong."

"Cou'se she can't!" he answered. "Lil'l Miss nevah done wrong in huh life. She ain't dat kin'. She's built 'long straight lines, Marse A'thuh, an' she ain't got no knowin' dat othah folkes ain't like huhse'f. An' when she fin's out dey ain't, ef dat pusson am one she likes, it's gwian to be a bad day foh huh, shore, de day she makes dat 'skivery; foh Lil'l Miss ain't got nobody to fall back on. She's jus' as much alone up dah in dat big house, Marse A'thuh, as yoh is down in de ole one. I know! I know!" and the old man shook his head and looked far way toward the hills, silvered with the light of the rising moon.

"An' dey ain't nobody got a lovenner heart dan Lil'l Miss," he finished, bringing back his dim eyes to the tense face beside him.

"I believe you are right, Uncle Major," said

Arthur slowly, and bidding the old man good night, he turned and retraced his steps home. He went like one in a dream. He had gone forth in uncertainty, and, meeting Milly, he had thought his doubt dispelled, but the result had not proven satisfactory. Quite different was the effect of the unconscious words of the old man. There was no caste in the world of friendship. As he had said, it left them on one level. It mattered not that Alexander Frazier owned part of his father's property. His daughter and he, Arthur Stanton, were friends, and his ancient lineage and her newly acquired wealth, made no difference in their estate in the land of friendship. They were on one level. Pride might stand by him when he met her father, but it had no place in his intercourse with the daughter. As Lucy's friend, he would attend the party in the house of the man he regarded as an enemy. Lucy's friend owed it to her to do all in his power to add to her happiness; for in so doing, he also found his own.

And so it befel that Arthur's acceptance of the invitation was dispatched the following morning. Had Aunt Jenny known of the nightly visit to the loghouse, and the unconscious part played by her

husband in deciding for Arthur Stanton, she would have seen in it another instance of the inscrutable working of the unseen power that had so long and steadily been employed against those of his race.

## CHAPTER X

THE attendance at Lucy's party, which, contrary to Arthur's expectations, he had enjoyed, necessitated a call. As he turned in at the gateway a few mornings later to discharge his social debt, he determined, this done, not to come hither again. There were in the association elements that might prove dangerous to his future peace of mind, and he ever had considered it the height of folly in a man to risk a possession so essential to his happiness and well-being.

Lucy was sitting on the veranda. The heavy vines draping it hid her from him until he had mounted the steps. Then she spoke, and turning quickly he was conscious of a strange gladness in his heart as he saw her smiling face looking up at him from the piece of needlework in her hands.

"Mamma has gone to town," she said, rising to make room for him on the bench. Her thimble slipped from her finger and rolled across the floor.

"I am fortunate in finding her industrious daugh-

ter at home," he said, and then stooped to pick it up. "Permit me to return your dainty implement," he added, handing the thimble to her.

"It is so loose, for it is mamma's," she complained, slipping it back on her finger. "I lost mine."

"I will fix it so it won't come off," he said. He took a notebook from his pocket, and with her scissors cut a narrow strip of paper. "Now give me your hand!" he commanded, and when she held it out, he wrapped the paper around the top of her finger with care and then fitted the thimble. "Now," he said, "that pretty little hand is equipped for its warfare with the needle! Don't grow indignant when I say I never imagined it was a warfare you let it often engage in."

"Why not, pray?" she inquired, taking up the napkin she was hemstitching.

"Oh, why must a woman always demand a reason for everything?" he exclaimed.

"Because we are so unreasonable," she answered, and then both laughed. And Arthur Stanton swiftly realized that it was pleasant, indeed, to sit here in the vine-covered piazza with Lucy, cool and sweet as the day itself, in her simple muslin

dress, with flowers blue as her eyes, scattered lavishly over its snowy ground.

They talked of the party with the zest of youth which finds such joy in the retrospection of happy hours, and argued on the merits of the men and the beauty of the women who had attended it; and then their words were silenced by a mocking bird which broke forth into its rapturous song from his place in the locust tree at the end of the veranda. As they listened in silence, Lucy's eyes were on her sewing, while his gaze was fixed on her bent head, and the little hand swiftly drawing the needle in and out of the white cloth. A strange quietness enfolded her. It touched him with a feeling akin to awe, and the impulse came to him to slip away and leave her to the dreams of peace and joy of girlhood. It was then she lifted her eyes and encountered his. A moment followed of surprise for each. A flashlight had been turned upon their souls, and the wonder of what they felt rather than saw, for the moment was too brief for vision, left them dumb. The rush of joy that came after sent the light into his eyes, the color to her cheeks.

"Isn't it beautiful—his song?" she hastened to say, looking over her shoulder at the tree. "My

window opens upon that locust, and oh, to hear him break the still heart of the night with his song! Why, sometimes it overpowers me and—I have to cry!”

“Why do you let yourself feel things that way?” he asked, and his voice would have sounded harsh had it not been so muffled.

“I can’t help it,” she answered. “It is always so. When I am my own true self,” she added, looking at him bravely enough now, “I know I would not have it otherwise. Think how deep, how complete is my enjoyment of that bird’s song!”

“But there are other things in life besides birds’ songs,” he rejoined, his eyes dwelling tenderly on her flower-like face. “There is pain, and you’ll feel it deeper likewise. It is the penalty paid for the deeper enjoyment.”

“I shall not call it too high,” she said, lifting her face, which showed a faint smile.

“You can say that now, because you do not know what suffering—real suffering is,” he said hastily. “They wouldn’t be so glibly spoken, those words, if you had ever felt its iron grasp upon your soul.”

“If it were there now, I should still say it,” she



cried, "say it and believe it true, and find in the very pain something unknown to others."

The words seemed suddenly to draw a veil from some depths of his nature of whose existence he had not dreamed, and the sight perhaps more shocked than surprised him. It set him on his feet, and then he said, excusingly:

"I should like to see those roses of which you spoke a while ago. Did you know I have gone in for horticulture?"

"No," she replied, laying aside her work. "Wait until I get my hat."

She left him alone for a moment, and he had himself well in hand before her return. The garden stood at the south side of the house, and the way to it went between a border of low growing, old-fashioned flowers. Pinks and sweet williams and the innocent face of the phlox looked up at him, as he walked by the side of the girl who had planted them years before, and whose loving hands were now tending them in their maturity. There was a certain precision about the garden that was eloquent of her mother, whom, having met the first time the night of the party, he had straightway disliked. As the walk progressed the personality of the

mother grew more pronounced, and with it came, unreasonably, a sense of injustice done to him by her; and he was glad when the tour of inspection was over.

"And where is your special nook?" he asked. "Somehow I can not fail to find it here."

"How keen you are!" she cried. "I love flowers, but not in a garden, and mamma thinks that is the only place for them. I shall now introduce you to my bower."

She led the way toward the orchard. It was heavily set in clover, and the tall crimson heads reaching up touched them as they passed, while over the place was the hum of the bees. At the end of the orchard was an oak tree, under which, perchance, the first of his Kentucky ancestors had often stood, as he surveyed the great estate he would leave to his descendants. The heavy bluegrass, the only unchanging thing the tree found amid a world of changes, grew up to its trunk and in places the long slender blades swept the rough bark. Where the tree faced the north, a root protruded somewhat, forming a natural chair, and as she sank down on it and rested her head against the great bole, he quoted some stanzas from "The Talking Oak."

"Whose is that?" she questioned.

"Tennyson's," he answered, throwing himself on the grass beside her. "Is it possible you are not acquainted with Tennyson?"

"It truly is," she replied. "You know I was so busy reading history in school, that it is only since coming home I got on speaking terms with the poets. And there are so many of them."

"But not too many?" he questioned.

"Am I a barbarian?" she cried.

"Philosophers are not as a rule loyal friends of the bards," he explained, inclining his head toward her with the slight mockery she had come to know in his voice. "And who are your companions under the oak tree?"

"Well," she began, hesitatingly, "there is Keats—"

"Yes, and who else?" he asked, as she paused.

"Why—just Keats," she answered, laughingly. "He so loved the greensward you know, it looks unfriendly not to invite him out here on such days. And then when he begins to sing—well, you forget the others."

"You would not say that if you knew Tennyson," he insisted. "The day after tomorrow—it

is Sunday, you know, when I am free from all duty—I am going to come up here to your oak, and bring my Tennyson along. I shall expect to meet you here, prepared to listen to me read my favorite poems to you. Then, if I find you appreciative, you may have my bard for a week. At the end of that period you will be ready to sell all the books that you have, the histories included, to procure a copy.”

“The histories were not mine,” she said, her laugh rippling her lovely face. “Why do you dislike the histories, Arthur?”

“I don’t!” he declared. “I love them. If it weren’t for the histories we might agree, and that would never do. Had you taken to poetry instead, I might have found you a dreamer, and, as I am one myself, two of a kind is one too many. Had you gone in for romance, you would have been a sentimentalist, and that would have wearied me. As you are, you suit me admirably,” he finished, the hint of a smile on his face.

“And I suppose I should be glad on this account?” she retorted.

“It is your duty to be so,” he answered gravely, whereupon she flung at him a clover blossom which

she had broken off in passing through the orchard. He picked it up, looked at it for a moment, and then deliberately laid it back on the ground.

"You should not destroy things that way," he admonished. "That clover blossom had as much right to live out its allotted time as you have."

"How do you know but it had done so?" she asked. "That it was its fate to be plucked by me in this very way, in this very hour?"

"That is not nature's method," he answered, "hence I see in your act only a wanton interference with her plans, when, in passing through the clover, you snapped off this pretty blossom, to toss it from you when it suited your fancy to do so. If you take selfishness, and thoughtlessness, and cruelty out of the world, Lucy, you will find there is very little of Fate left."

"Those things are not Fate," she contradicted. "They may be the means by which Fate often operates, but that is all. Were they not in existence, she would find others through which to work her will upon life. Often those who live surrounded by love are the most helpless victims of her will."

"And who has not found love more often thoughtless, selfish and cruel than not?" he asked, his eyes leaving her face for the tree-belted horizon.

"But you cannot call that love!" she exclaimed.

"It is so catalogued," he rejoined, again turning toward her.

"O Arthur!" she cried, bending slightly forward, her fine face glowing with feeling, "you do not call it so? You know that love would suffer itself to shield the loved one, that it lives in the thought of that loved one's happiness, that the sword that finds the loved one has first pierced love's own heart."

"You are talking now of God's love," he said slowly, "not man's."

"And man's love is the reflection of God's," she asserted.

"Perhaps, but the medium is so utterly bad we rarely find a true reflection," he said.

She looked at him, pitying him. Catching her expression, amusement flashed into his eyes.

"You regard me as one of the unredeemed!" he exclaimed, but almost instantly he grew grave. "I do not express these views often, perhaps I strive not to hold them; but a few years in the courtroom, Lucy, if you are a thinking person, do not tend to exalt your ideals of human nature."

"But it is only one portion of human nature you find there," she objected.

"Because there has arisen no occasion calling for the presence of the other portions," he said. "Had there been, we should be asked to examine the same picture of selfishness, thoughtlessness and cruelty—the three cornerstones of humanity."

"And the fourth, is what?" she asked.

"There is no fourth," he rejoined. "But the ground upon which the three stand is ignorance."

"Not always," she hastened to say. "There is wisdom—"

"A mere carving on the completed structure," he interrupted.

"I could never, never subscribe to so heartless a doctrine," she said. "It makes for despair."

"O no!" he cried, looking up, his eyes now cleared of all the gloom brought by the thoughts. "You don't have to finish the house with the rough foundation stones. You can lay on them the trim, shapely bricks, or crown them with a structure of finely chiseled rock, or rear a glittering palace of costly marble. You can adorn it with all the beauty of column and niche and delicate tracery—"

But she shook her head.

"What does it matter what we build for the

eyes of the world to see, when the unseen upon which it stands is so unsightly?" she cried. "I should always have to remember the hideous cornerstone, the dank ground on which they stand."

"Is it not something calling for our respect and admiration that upon such a foundation we can build so fair a temple?" he asked, his searching eyes on her face.

"I should rather know the foundation were fair," she said sadly.

"But it isn't, Lucy," he insisted. "Strike down far enough in the heart of the best of us and you find the primal animal. All that we may be superior to that, is the result of conscious or unconscious effort on our own part and the part of the race in the past."

Her hands were clasped around her knees, the slender figure was bent forward, while the eyes were bent thoughtfully on the green pasture sweeping back to a field of wheat, ripening for the harvest. As he gazed upon her, he felt his opinions beginning to waver, so improbable did it seem that this fair life upon which he looked rested on that foundation. The slip of paper he had placed on it to secure the thimble, was still securely wrapped



around the tapering finger. He leaned forward and playfully removed it, and she started from her reveries at the touch of his hand on hers.

“See how it has marked your finger!” he said, holding it up for her inspection. She looked indifferently at the red hand below the nail and drew away her hand in silence. Her silence filled him with vague misgivings, which the troubled expression of her brow quickened. He could not understand it, and the withdrawal of her hand seemed to prohibit a question. But when he left she seemed to go with him to the office, as on that other day she had accompanied him to the field, and always the thought of her was thrusting itself before him when a moment’s relaxation from work came. It was a seductive thought, too, one which, young as he was, he perceived had in it the power to gain the ascendancy in his mind, and thus interfere with his work. Work was all that now remained to Arthur Stanton, and he turned to it as an opium fiend to his drug. By strenuous effort he was succeeding in his profession, and the prospects opening before him were promising. But he understood himself sufficiently well to know that, if that future were to be realized, he must keep his life free from

such distractions as his friendship with Lucy Frazier invited. With Sylva the case was different. Once out of her presence it was as if she did not exist, while a mere meeting with the other girl called for effort for forgetfulness. Equally annoying was it that the prospect of seeing her could thus seem to retard the progress of time, making the hours until the Sunday afternoon appear interminably long.

But she was not waiting for him under the oak tree as he had half-expected, and, as the minutes passed and she did not come, it was borne in upon his consciousness that she had no intention of doing so. He would find her at the house, but not on her seat under the oak tree. This strict adherence to the rule of conduct the suspicious words of the old negress had set for her, now irritated him, and he decided to go home and never again cross Lucy Frazier's way nor permit a thought of her to bother him. But the prospect of the long afternoon, with its disappointment, rose before him, and he hesitated. As he stood there in indecision, the remark made by Uncle Major concerning the girl's loneliness occurred to him. He could readily believe that between her and her self-contained mother there was little of that sympathy and comradeship which

a nature like Lucy's hungered for, that rather the mother stood above her as a strict mentor and judge, and any lapse from what was held by her to be right would be mercilessly condemned in the daughter. With the idea strong in his mind, he left his place and went to the house; but when Lucy came down the little gleam in her eyes seemed to indicate that he had been mistaken in his opinion of the reason of her absence.

"Don't you think one ought to keep one's appointments?" he asked, trying not to be softened by the appealing loveliness of the face before him.

"Who has not done so?" she asked.

"Weren't we to read Tennyson under the oak tree this afternoon?" he asked.

"You said you would, but I did not promise to fall in with your plan," she replied. "Perhaps it doesn't suit me."

"Why does it not suit you?" he asked playfully, and then it suddenly occurred to him that Lucy was not in a playful mood. The smile on her face was forced, and the light in her eyes was too dry for coquetry.

"Why must a man always demand a reason for everything?" she exclaimed, repeating his question of the other day.

"Because we are reasonable creatures," he answered, but he did not laugh. "And I am going to read Tennyson to you this afternoon, either here in this room or out there under the tree. Which is your choice?"

"And who said I was to be your audience?" she asked, and the short nervous laugh accompanying the words sounded strange from Lucy.

"I believe I did," he answered, looking into her restless eyes with a sudden feeling that this girl was not the Lucy he knew. "And you will not disappoint me?"

"Would it be a disappointment?" she asked, trying to speak lightly.

"A dreadful one," he rejoined. "It would spoil my whole day. You don't want to do that, I know."

"I can only stay a short while," she said, tying on her hat.

"Why not?" he asked, a sudden thought occurring to him. When she did not speak, he repeated his question and there was a tone in his voice that the girl was not likely to disobey.

"I am going out driving with Jasper at four," she said, with a half-smothered gasp.

He heard only the words, and they made him

set his teeth, while a new expression came into his young face. Then he said, carelessly:

“Until four we will read Tennyson.”

Arthur walked to his home through the fields in a bad frame of mind. He had exerted himself to make the hour one of pure intellectual enjoyment for Lucy, in order that she should contrast it, to Jasper's disadvantage, with the one that was to follow; and promptly at four o'clock he had closed the book, handed it to her, and taken his departure. As his face was turned from her, however, and his steps carried him through her father's land on his way home, the quiet expression that his countenance had worn faded, and in its stead came one of wounded pride.

Some bad epithets he applied to himself while journeying down the hill to the quiet valley, where the log house stood. Reaching the ancient privet bush which his great ancestress had planted near the brook, at the place over which later Uncle Major had built the bridge for his Lil'l Miss, he paused, and reconsidering what had occurred, admitted that he had met punishment only adequate to his folly. Against every established rule of conduct, against every principle of pride, he had permitted the senti-

ments kindled by a girl's pretty face and fanned by an ignorant negro's words to dominate his actions and send him to those whom, according to every traditional feeling, he should avoid. While he had held aloof, he had plainly shown her he recognized as still existing the chasm which it had formerly been decreed divided them. He, not she, had denied its existence, and she had punished him this afternoon for his ever having admitted it. The thought seemed to burn his brain. He winced under it and in that moment was fully convinced that he hated Lucy Frazier more fiercely than he had done in childhood days. Thus convinced he resolved he would clip the wings of her victory, as he had done once before. There was now, however, no wise and honor-loving friend to point out the way to be pursued, instead was a nature, lashed to fury by wounded pride and a misapprehended passion. But even in that moment the course it advised was such, it made him hasten to leave the place, sweet with the associations of happier hours of youthful friendship.

## CHAPTER XI

LUCY's hour with Jasper was as miserable as Arthur could have wished. Vainly she exerted herself to find interest in the words which flowed uninterruptedly from his lips, for Jasper reticent with others, with Lucy knew no feeling of reserve. To her he could unfold his soul, and had the girl not been so wrapped up in the thought of Arthur, whose chagrin she had felt rather than observed, she might have found by her side a worthier object of her regard. But eventually her inattention which she strove to conceal, made itself apparent to the young man, and he looked at her with solicitude in his dark eyes.

"Lucy," he said, out of a silence during which he had regarded her closely, "is there anything the matter? You don't seem like yourself."

She laughed and bringing her blue eyes back to him, said, irrelevantly:

"I am thinking of something you said long ago to me, Jasper, and contrasting it with your present

conversation. I suppose you have forgotten it, but you see I did not have a chance to do so, being so soon afterward thrown in with a person who loved it and lived in its atmosphere in thought, if not always in reality. It was what you said about art and your desire to be an artist, the day Arthur and Milly walked off and left us together by the spring."

"But I do remember," he hastened to reply. "I told you I envied you because in all probability you would find an artist in the school to which you were going."

"And I did," she said, slowly. "The most beautiful woman I think I have ever seen. Such eyes—O Jasper, her eyes! Brown and full of golden light and set in a face like a cameo. Only twenty-four and with the wonderful world of art opening before her and ample means to live in it, and yet she turned from it for the convent door, where nobody understands her and where her life-work is the teaching of silly schoolgirls—verily casting her pearls before swine!—And she is happy! Can you understand it?"

"Yes," he said, and his eyes dropped slowly from her tense, pale face, "I think I understand it, Lucy."

"Then tell me, won't you?" she cried, leaning



forward, seeking for his eyes, but he held them fixed on her white hands clasped nervously on her lap. "As I grew older and probably because I knew you, I seemed to get closer to Sister Claire than to any of the others, and once I asked her how she could do it and be happy."

"And what did she say?" he questioned.

"I cannot recall it, no matter how much I try," she rejoined. "I only remember the words left me more perplexed than before, and the sense of hurt that came afterward. I was honest in my questioning, and it might have helped me all my life if I had gotten an honest answer. The higher call comes to all of us, Jasper, and often; and it were well to know the way others found to answer it."

"She did not mean to perplex you, Lucy," he said. "She simply spoke her language and you could not understand it—that is all. No one ever really made another comprehend his meaning and purpose unless that other stood in the same circle with himself."

"Where do you get such notions, Jasper?" suddenly demanded Lucy, now meeting his luminous eyes.

"There is nothing remarkable in them," he answered, retreating before the personality of the question.

"Can one learn that secret language?" she hastened to say, feeling this withdrawal.

"There is nothing that can long remain a secret to the one who determines to know," he answered.

"Then tell me," she suddenly demanded, "how you, who have no part in this life here, stay in it and are happy?"

"What else could I do?" he questioned, looking her fully in the face. "All the other children died. Four generations of sons have inherited and lived in that place, and it would break my father's heart if I were to abandon the pursuit of agriculture. Long ago I realized that—I think it was known to my soul that day, young though I was, when we sat and talked of such deep things by the old spring. I'll admit there were times when it bit like salt and vinegar. But since some one had to suffer, why should it be he instead of me? Why should it not be I, voluntarily accepting the suffering instead of thrusting it upon him?"

"No! No!" she cried. "I could never agree with you in that in a thousand years. You have

your life to live, and it is your duty to live it to its fullest. If parents have children more highly endowed with the gifts of the gods than themselves, they should find in it matter for congratulation that they have been made the instruments of bringing those gifts into the world, and lend themselves freely to aid in their development, instead of putting obstacles in the way."

"Where did you get such notions, Lucy?" he exclaimed, the deep smile on his face; and then instantly continued: "It is all, I suppose, a matter of temperament. With some it might be easy to follow such a course as you outline; with me it would be impossible: I will not say there is no selfishness in it. Perhaps because I am selfish to a most refined degree is why I can do it."

She met his eyes and shook her head disbelievingly, because she did not understand. He hesitated for a moment; then continued without offering any elucidation:

"And having made my decision, I shut the door forever on the life that might have been mine. I might have succeeded there, why shall I not here? You cannot deny it is an interesting life and almost as free as the one foresworn. If I cannot paint

pictures on canvas, I shall assist nature in making a fair picture of this portion of the earth allotted to me. There now! Laugh at me if you will, but in this confession you discover why I spent three days this spring planting wild roses along the old fence that separates our land from Mr. Dalton's, why I select my corn and wheat fields with reference to the remainder of the landscape as well as in consideration of the fitness of the soil."

Lucy did not laugh, but her eyes met his with a new gleam of comprehension in their blue depths. Presently she again shook her head.

"It is a beautiful sentiment, Jasper," she said then, "but it will not carry you through. It is only a fictitious interest you take in this work to which you have set yourself. It may last to the limit of your youth, but when you find your face turned to the west—what then?"

So long did he remain silent, a feeling of fear of she knew not what, began to grow upon her. When at length he turned his face toward her from the white road creeping dreamily on under the interlacing branches of the great trees, it was so grave and old it smote her as unfamiliar.

"I have told you so much, Lucy," he began, "I

may as well complete the picture of my life for you. I shall then live in my son."

The color deepened on her cheeks at the words, and though the answering warmth was on his brow, he continued steadily:

"I feel that one shall come after me to inherit whatever of talent I possess, even as I was sent to inherit my father's land. Him no parental chains shall bind to a life he knows is not his own. Though it broke my heart to part from him, I shall myself open for him the door of the life he desires. In his work, in his happiness in it, I shall find strength to carry me to the end of the journey without one backward glance of regret."

A chill for all the sunniness of the afternoon crept along her veins as she listened, and her face seemed to freeze under his eyes, so terrible to her was this complete annihilation of self. By the side of it, the sacrifice of the artist-nun looked poor indeed, for in turning from the world of art, she had been seeking a happiness she deemed higher and more complete than it could give. Relinquishment with her had been with the hope of finding something better, while he gave up with never a thought of compensation, human or divine.

Then a thought flashed into her mind, melting the iciness his words had caused to enfold her. The mother of that son would give him love and companionship, which would prove a staff to lean upon.

"And there is something else," she said.

"There are many things, doubtless, for those who need them," he said, simply. "What is this special thing you have in mind?"

"Love," she said softly.

"You mean," he began, and then paused, puzzled by her answer.

"Your wife, of course!" she said, quickly, marveling at his stupidity.

An ashen hue overspread his face and noting it, she asked herself when had she before seen this gray on his countenance.

"The woman I love I shall not marry," he said in a voice that mated with the color of his face, and then she remembered it was thus he looked on the afternoon of the picnic, when some one alluded to the time Milly had thrown her arms around his neck, in gratitude for his saving a bird's life. One reason her mind instantly assigned for his confession and it sent the scornful light into her eyes.

"And do you expect me to sympathize with you in this?" she asked in ringing voice. "Then you shall be disappointed, and if you feel the sharpest pain of your life because of this fate, take it as my belief that you richly deserve it and worse,—if there be worse! I do not know that there is even anything good in the sacrifice you are making for your father. It may be, sifted to the bottom, that you are afraid to put your talent to the test. You prefer the certain consolation the knowledge of sacrifice gives, to the possible realization of having made a great mistake in following your inclinations."

"Why, Lucy!" he exclaimed, surprised out of his habitual calm by her assertions. "What causes have I ever given you to form such an estimation of my character?"

"The one," she answered slowly, "who proves a traitor to the supreme love of his life because of the altogether false notion regarding difference in positions, is liable to be guilty of any other base and unmanly thing."

"You have made a great mistake, Lucy," he said, after a moment's hesitation. "It is not difference in position that separates us, but her love for another."

In all her brief life little Lucy Frazier had never heard a voice so clearly express the hopeless sorrow of a soul, and the answering tears crowded into her tender eyes. She slipped her hand into his, and said, brokenly:

"Forgive me, Jasper!"

"That's all right, little girl!" he said, and then for a long while they drove on in absolute silence.

Burning words rose to Lucy's lips, and then words of encouragement against this despair, prompted by sympathy for her friend and a dread of what might befall herself, for she could not but remember that the one whom Milly loved was Arthur Stanton, and that he had said she stood between him and loneliness. They died unspoken, however, for something, she could not define what, in the man by her side, prevented their utterance. Then, out of that long silence, he said:

"I shall not expect anything of my wife I cannot give. She shall come to me in the full knowledge of my life. I do not think she will love me—indeed, I believe she will only come because of the fact that love is not asked of her. We shall both know it to be the companionship of two lonely hearts, two thwarted lives."



As she heard him, the bright, sun-flecked road upon which they traveled, became to the eyes of the girl, suddenly long, black and lonely, and she beheld herself as the wife of whom this man by her side spoke. She seemed to feel the gasping of her dying heart as it went forward chained to the dead one in his breast; then, a great wave of oblivion swept over them and the dark road suddenly ended.

Slowly, as one awakening, she came back to the conscious world to find nothing changed. The turnpike ran dreamily on, here showing large patches of sunshine, there covered with alluring shadows, and over it the horse went with the light easy step of a thoroughbred. She stole a glance at Jasper and saw that his face wore once more its exalted expression, made the more pronounced by the paleness it still showed. Her mental swoon, or the projection of her soul into futurity, he had not noticed, so deeply was he absorbed in his own thoughts.

She studied his face as she had never studied another, not even the one which was stamped on her soul. More beautiful than that other, there was on it, in addition, all that a woman who loved him would want to find there. Gradually her eyes were

drawn up to his, searching the road creeping on before them.

"What do you see?" she cried to herself, and again the picture that had stunned her rose weirdly before her—the dark, lonely way, and they two bending on silently to the end, which was oblivion. Something like a shriek rose from the innermost recess of her being. Reaching her lips it voiced itself in an exclamation, which drew him swiftly from his deep reflection.

"Did you speak, Lucy?" he asked, the smile again on his face.

"It is getting late," she said, drearily. "Let us go home."

"I fear I have proven poor company this afternoon," he said apologetically, as the horse's head turned homeward, they went back in a brisk trot. "I believe we are both in a bad mood, or rather I made you share mine. It is very rarely I permit myself the luxury of talking about myself. Indeed, I do not recall that I have ever spoken to anyone as to you this afternoon. But there was always that about you, Lucy—we would tell you all about ourselves; and singularly enough, having given you our confidence, we never afterward regretted it.

Nor do I now. But I promise you it will not be repeated, and I may call again, may I not?"

And Lucy, with one thought of Arthur, gave the desired permission, because she feared her mother.

The morning that Lucy had half made a promise to meet Arthur, her mother, returning from the town, had brought a letter for her daughter, and her watchful eyes, while the girl perused it, silently demanded its contents. Knowing this, and, wholly unaware of the hopes slowly forming in her mother's mind, Lucy remarked the note was from Jasper Long, asking to call on her the following Sunday afternoon and take her for a drive. The mother expressed her willingness and started in surprise when Lucy said she would not go.

"Why not?" the mother had inquired.

"I do not care to go," she had answered, adding immediately, for candor forbade any attempt at concealment, "and Arthur is coming up to bring me a book."

For all her apparent indifference to the treatment that had been accorded her by the society of the neighborhood, Mrs. Frazier had never quite absolved Mrs. Stanton and her daughter-in-law for their stud-

ied neglect of her. She had always felt that what was a matter of personal pleasure with the others, had been duty with them, her closest neighbors; and she was not disposed to yield her plans for her daughter to favor the whims of their son, Jasper, by his courteous deference to her on the one occasion they had met, a deference which Arthur had seemed grudgingly to bestow, had left with her a good impression; in addition, he was the only heir to a large and unencumbered farm, while the other had his fortune to make. She could readily believe that in his desire to achieve more quickly and easily, Arthur was willing to bury his dislike for the family he had never ceased to regard as strangers and interlopers; while Jasper, in seeking Lucy, was actuated by purer motives. And Lucy, she determined, should not spoil her future at the bidding of the haughty descendant of the woman who had steadily ignored her; therefore, she insisted that Jasper's invitation should be accepted.

"But mother," pleaded the girl, "I promised Arthur first. I must keep my word."

The argument was not without effect on the straightlaced woman, who said:

"Well, make your engagement with Jasper for a later hour. They are both your friends, and it is not maidenly to show a preference for the society of one above the other."

Being a wise woman she had said no more, and Lucy, warned intuitively against the act and yet not daring to disobey her mother, wrote an answer of acceptance to Jasper's note.

A passion of revolt took possession of the girl's heart. She was not one tamely to submit to injustice, and so she termed this interference with her inclinations. Arthur was and had long been the friend Jasper could never be. Companionship with him, even when in his worst mood, was more congenial than with any one she had ever known; and while she might be ready to make other sacrifices, she withheld this knowing she thereby preserved her own happiness. For this once, she told herself in the calm that followed, she would submit; afterward—

Recalling this determination, a blind rage seized her as she flung herself on the piazza bench that Sunday evening, while down the road sounded the feet of the departing horse, bearing Jasper to his home. With the power of decision in her own

hands, she had deliberately chosen to continue to be the tool of her mother's dislike and ambition. Nothing could have been easier than for her to show Jasper she did not desire their acquaintance to pass the bounds their school days had established. He would have understood her and thanked her for the regard for him such an act showed. To the high-minded young man nothing could have been more painful than the thought that he was causing her unhappiness.

"He will come again," she told herself, while the beat of the horse's hoofs sounded on her ears like a knell, "and Arthur will not. Then I shall get angry some day and offend Jasper, and I shall lose both my friends. I wish I had gone to White Sulphur. They do not need me here as I imagined. Father wants no one but brother, and little sister is more to mamma than I ever was or may hope to be. The only ones who really need me are Aunt Jenny and Uncle Major."

She broke into tears, overwhelmed by the thought that only to the happiness of two old negroes was she necessary; for to youth the belief that the world revolves around it is the most vital of its superstitions. The pathetic thought recurred to her the

following morning and sent her to the pantry to prepare a basket for her black friends.

"Aunt Jenny is getting very feeble," she said to her mother, "and not able to cook as she used to do."

"Why not send for Joe to carry down the basket?" said the mother. "It is so warm for you to go."

"I do not mind the heat," said Lucy, tying on her garden hat. "And they like to see me."

"But you must not forget, Lucy," said Mrs. Frazier, "that you are no longer a little girl. What is permissible in a child may be questionable in a young woman."

"What is wrong in carrying a basket of food to two poor negroes?" cried Lucy in astonishment.

"Nothing in that!" replied Mrs. Frazier quickly. "But have you not met Arthur Stanton there as you used to do in childhood?"

"Yes, but the meeting was purely accidental, as far as I am concerned," said Lucy, getting pale.

"I know that!" said she. "Nevertheless, you should avoid the possible recurrence of those accidental meetings."

"You mean I should give up going to Aunt

Jenny's," cried Lucy. "I can not do that, mamma! They need me—they love me—and long ago you told me to treasure affection, no matter who offered it to me."

"Nor do I bid you to do differently," Mrs. Frazier hastened to reply. "I simply am pointing out to you that now prudence must guide your actions, where before inclination or the command of others directed them."

Lucy made no response, but took the basket and set forth. She read the suspicion her mother had tried to conceal, and could have laughed bitterly at the implication that Arthur Stanton cared sufficiently for her, Lucy Frazier, to trouble himself to seek her. But if he did! Her heart grew tremulously happy at the suggestion and the tears suffused her eyes, so tenderly sweet and precious was the thought that Arthur should care for her.

With it still holding her mind, she passed around the corner of the old house, and saw him standing by the door, his straw hat pushed back from the arched white forehead. The color deepened on Lucy's cheeks. Attributing her embarrassment to another cause, Arthur hastened to say:

"I don't suppose you saw anything of Joe on



your way down the hill? Milly's mother is sick and I want to send him for the doctor."

Lucy had seen nothing of the boy, and entered the house to give the basket to Aunt Jenny, who was complaining audibly about "po'r white trash being so much bother to other folkses."

"Aunt Jenny is in a dreadfully bad humor, Lil'l Miss," he then said, looking in on them. "You see I induced Uncle Major to go forth and try to locate Joe, and she thinks I want to kill her old man by sending him out in such a sun," and he laughed at the idea of heat affecting the old negro. "There is not a bit of Christian charity in all Aunt Jenny's body, and I don't know why you are so good to her. Now look at that nice fried chicken Lil'l Miss has brought you, and the pie—cherry pie, as I live, and made, I'll warrant, by her own little hands! I tell you, Aunt Jenny, you are blessed beyond your deserts in having such a Lil'l Miss. You ought to show your gratitude to the good Lord by being kind to other poor wretches to whom Lil'l Miss could not be induced to give a single thought."

"G'long, Marse A'thuh, an' quit yoh foolin' de ole woman!" she exclaimed. "Lil'l Miss is good to folkses what is deservin', an' dem dat ain't, ain't got no claim on huh."

"How did you enjoy your drive?" inquired 'Arthur, smiling up at her as Lucy, having deposited the things on the table, came back to the door.

There was a change in his demeanor, so subtle another than the intuitive Lucy might have missed it. It fell in with her own new mood and instead of the answer she would on another day have given him, she said, her words getting tangled in a soft laugh:

"An hour with Tennyson under the oak tree were more enjoyable."

"Tennyson—and no one else?" he asked, trying to catch the blue eyes resolutely fixed on the top of the pear tree.

"Well, if there were one to read him to you when your eyes got tired, of course that one would be an available part of the company, but not necessary, you understand?"

"I understand, thoroughly! And when will it next suit your pleasure to permit the willing reader to rest your eyes? 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen!'" he finished, half singing the quotation.

The eyes in question were now turned fully upon him, and their light would have made another shrink. He only looked up at them, and calmly said:

"The poet would not thus have written of the other woman's eyes, had he seen yours, Lil'l Miss! And yet I have no reason to call them so. I could count on my fingers the times they have been 'sweetest eyes' when bent on me. For Jasper and Milly and Aunt Jenny and everybody they are such, but not for me."

"It is better to be singled out of the crowd even if for disfavor," she observed, but there was a smile lurking at the corners of her mouth, softening the indifference of her voice.

"But I desire not to be made the exception in this case," he answered. "I'd rather be a weed that Lucy regarded kindly, than a prince of the world if scorned by her. You don't believe me, I see, although I am bent on proving it to you. When are you going to answer my question?"

"Which question? You have asked me so many. You talk in interrogation marks. Here is Joe!"

"Rounded him up all right, Marse A'thuh!" exclaimed the old man as he came up leaning heavily on his stick. "Found him lyin' in de eldah patch fas' asleep, an' him promisin' Marse Frazur to have all dem bushes cut down foh him today! Tell yoh, Marse A'thuh, ef something ain't done wif dese

wor'flus nighas, dey'll go to de debbil, shore's yoh bohn. Ketch me sleepin' in de eldah patch when I wus his aige! Ole Marse 'ud a-leathahed my black back in good fashun. Times is changed, Marse A'thuh, times is changed, when a boy goes to sleep at his wo'k, an' den grumbles at his ole gran'daddy foh wakin' him up to go foh de doctah foh a po'r sick woman."

"I ain't a grumblin' kaze uf dat, but de way you axt me," said Joe, meekly. "I thought de young bull had broke loose an' was hookin me, de way yoh holered an' poked me wif yoh stick."

"I oughter welted yoh wif de stick instaid uv jus' pokin' yoh wif it," declared Uncle Major, dropping into the bench. "Go an' fotch me a tin-cup uv watah, son, an' be shore yoh drop a red-hot coal in it. It's bad foh de systum to drink cole wattah when yoh's wahmed up wif a walk."

When Joe returned with the drink, Arthur dispatched him for the physician; then, turning to Lucy, he said:

"If your St. Elizabethan mission is finished, let us start, Lil'l Miss! I have a mind to walk with you as far as the privet bush. Do you remember the day," he began, as they went forward, "we

played it was a castle, and the brook a mighty torrent which I had to cross to rescue you? You were held a prisoner in the green castle, you remember, watched by a grim uncle who was a king, and who had designs against your life, because of your right to the throne. I was a knight sent by another king to release you, and bring you in safety to him, as he desired to make you his bride. You were always high and mighty in your opinions of yourself, Lil'l Miss."

"But you did not obey the order of your king, you remember? Milly came for you to go on an errand for your mother," remarked Lucy.

"And because I would obey a mother who was real indeed, instead of a king who was purely imaginary, the angry princess refused to come out of the green castle. The knight was so tortured by the thought that she might still be there, he could not sleep when he went to bed, and so he rose, dressed, and ran as fast as his feet could carry him up the dark valley haunted by Indians as the negroes said and as he in that hour firmly believed. When he came to the green castle and found it deserted, he did not know whether to feel wholly glad or wholly angry, so he made a compromise, and when next the

little princess met the gallant knight she was greatly perplexed by his mood."

"Did you really do that, Arthur?" asked Lucy, fixing her wondering eyes on him.

"I really did," he said, looking at her, unaware that his face had grown strangely tender, for the impulse was strong upon him to take the slender form in his arms and close the blue eyes with his kisses. Then, like a blow from a strong hand, came the recollection of the promise he had made to himself on the spot only the day before. He flung mood and recollection from him, and to escape from them, he plunged into a different subject.

"Milly's mother is very sick," he said. "I do not think there is any chance for her recovery. She thinks so herself, I fear. She asked that I should not go to town this morning, until after she had the opinion of the doctor. There seems to be something on her mind besides the condition of her health. There was always something peculiar about this woman to me. She gave me the impression of one whose conscience was troubling her. If that should be the case, it is a minister she needs, not a lawyer."

"Perhaps it is for the lawyer to decide if she need the minister," said Lucy, with constraint. She

could not feel at ease in discussing Milly or her family with him. "Her father is failing, too," she added.

"I have always felt," he said, "it would be infinitely better for Milly if she were released from her care of them. She must find her position painful in the extreme, and if she were not burdened by that helpless couple, she could better it. But you have not answered my question, Lil'l Miss," he broke off, not finding the subject interesting.

"Don't you think I can read Tennyson alone?" she asked, pulling a green twig from the bush.

"Yes, but it would be better if you didn't," he replied, laughing. "May I come up Wednesday evening and read to you on the piazza by the light of the moon?"

"You forget the vines," she said, with a little laugh that was so full of gladness it half shamed the man.

"But I bring the light of memory with me," he said. "And I may come?"

She nodded, and he said:

"Give me your hand on it. And there will be no later engagement to disappoint me again?" he added, his hand still clasping hers.

"You don't understand," she faltered, trying to withdraw her fingers.

"Perhaps I do, Lucy," he said, so gently that her hand lay quietly in his for a moment, for if Arthur understood and did not blame her, what did the efforts of her mother matter? Then they parted, but as Arthur went down the green valley, instead of feeling elation over the auspicious opening of his plans, he was lost in the memory of the moment when the suddenly stilled hand had lain in his.



## CHAPTER XII

ARTHUR lingered on the rear veranda until he saw the doctor emerging from the sick woman's home, when he joined him. Declining the invitation to enter and rest before continuing his long journey through the country, the doctor said, in answer to Arthur's inquiry:

"She is pretty bad, my boy. I do not think she will be living this time tomorrow. And her husband will not be many months after her. The man has held out a little longer, because he felt he must, while the woman had the girl upon whom to depend. A very singular person is that daughter. I suppose you know her very well?"

"Yes," said Arthur, slowly, "very well."

"Then perhaps you can tell me if she has ever been seen to show any outward indication of the feeling presupposed in a woman with such a nature as hers?"

"I have always seen her self-contained," answered Arthur.

"If it should ever escape the bounds," said the doctor, and then paused effectively.

"It never will," said Arthur, well knowing the intense feeling the doctor was giving the girl had no foundation outside of his own mind.

A doubt of this belief came to him a little later, when the interview to which he was summoned by Milly's father was ended. As he entered the room, he saw the woman sitting upon the bed with pillows carefully propped around her. Her eyes wore a burning brightness, accentuating the deadly pallor of her skin. Her husband sat on a chair on the other side of the bed, but Milly was absent. Arthur took the place that had been the doctor's, and asked how she was now feeling.

"Very bad, Mr. Arthur," she said. "I have not long to live, sir, and I want to tell you about Milly."

"Yes," said Arthur, feebly, and then he realized that since the message had come of the sick woman's desire to see him, he had known that her words would be of Milly and he had shrunk from hearing them.

"I cannot die until I have told you about Milly," she continued. "You will then tell me if what I did was wrong, for I do not know. I am an ignorant

mountain woman, and what looked right to me may be wrong to one who knows."

"You did not think it was wrong, Becky," the old man hastened to say. "You probably saved the child's life."

"Only probably, Steve," she answered, "and probably isn't much of a comfort, seeing what Milly has been to us, when our own children broke away and left us to live or die. Probably looks mighty poor when life's about over and you can't undo things."

"There now, wife! Don't carry on like that!" said he soothingly, and Arthur thought he had never heard a man's voice so tender. "And Mr. Arthur's here to decide all your doubts for you, so go on and tell him about Milly."

"Yes, Steve, I haven't forgot Mr. Arthur's here and that he is my judge," and as she spoke she turned her burning eyes upon the young man on the other side of the bed. "You've been a good friend to us all along, Mr. Arthur, and if you think when I am through that you gave your kindness to one that was wicked and undeserving, don't let that turn you against my old man. He had no hand in it, except that he shielded me. And that is the reason,

I reckon, why he's been so unlucky. He ought to have made me confess the whole thing. He would have done so, Mr. Arthur, for he is a right-living man, if he had not loved me so much. It's hard to strike down the love of your heart, sir."

"So opposed to nature is the act," said Arthur, "that there is always a doubt left in the mind of those witnessing it if that one's love were deep and true."

"I knew you would not blame him," said she triumphantly. "I knew he had lived too long under your eyes for you not to understand him. And now I can tell you everything and take your opinion of me, whatever it may be, since he will not have to share it."

She paused for a minute, during which she breathed heavily, then she began her story.

"I was born in the West Virginia mountains," she said, "and worked hard with my father all my girlhood. When I married my husband came to live with us. The year after our marriage the war broke out. My father took up arms against the South, and my husband fought for it, and with this division, you may judge what I suffered. They left within a week of each other, and my father never

came back. That year my first child was born, and neither father nor grandfather ever saw it. When it died and I had to bury it with my own hands, I thought my heart broke. Now I believe it did, for I became a changed woman, and though I have two other children, I never loved them as other mothers love their offspring, as I had loved my first baby.

“ When the war was over, my poor husband came back, broken in health and to a ruined home. Our place had often been visited by raiders from both sides, one revenging themselves because of my Union father, the other because of my Confederate husband. Stock, crops, the little money we had saved, everything but the land and house was gone. We had not the heart to take up life bravely, and yet we had not the courage to quit it. For several years we dragged on this sort of an existence, and then that came to us, brought by me, which sent us far from the mountains.

“ The two wealthiest men of the neighborhood lived in the village in the valley. They were brothers, and between them there existed the deadliest hate. Like my husband and father, they had been on different sides during the war, and though when it was over they laid aside their guns, they brought

back their enmity. The brother who had been on the Southern side, had married a Virginian lady whom he had met while a soldier. She was very beautiful and of good family, but of course she had lost everything, and was fortunate in finding a husband who was fairly well off. You see when the war began, the father of the two men turned everything he possessed, except the land, into gold, and went to Mexico until peace was restored. His money had been making money during his years of exile, and he was able to give his sons more than they would have had if the war had not broken out.

“The son who had been the Confederate soldier was always his favorite, and this made his brother even more bitter against him, since to him went the lion’s share of the old man’s wealth. Then the other son had married a native of the valley, who had neither the beauty nor breeding of her sister-in-law. And they were childless, while the other brother had a lovely baby daughter. But the mother died. Her death, the doctor maintained, was due to natural causes, but it drove the husband half crazy, and he accused his brother and his wife of having poisoned her. The charge brought on a duel, and the Confederate brother was killed.

“The uncle then took the child, for there was no one else to care for it. All this trouble seemed to affect the mind of the father, who also believed his other son and daughter-in-law had brought about the death of the child’s mother, to whom he was devoted. He thought they would send the child after its parents, in order that they would inherit all the property as the next of kin.

“No one liked the uncle, and consequently all believed the worst of him. I shared in the belief, and when one night the old gentleman came to our house and asked me to take the child out of the country, I was willing enough to do so, for I wanted to leave the place, but hitherto there had been no opportunity. The Ku-Klux were bad in those days, burning houses and driving people away. But they would never have molested us, for my husband gave offense to no one. Now, however, as the old grandfather and I had agreed upon, for I knew my husband too well to let him into the secret, we began to receive threatening letters, ordering us to leave the mountains or bear the consequences. I pleaded with my husband to obey, but he laughed at me, saying it was a joke some of the boys were playing upon him. Then one night I woke up to find the house

on fire. We saved our own lives and our children's, and that was all. My husband did not know what to do, and I said we must quit the wretched place, or the next time they would kill us outright. It was the work of the friends of the Union brother, I took care to point out, who wished to destroy all the sympathizers with the cause of the dead Confederate brother. They were fighting the war, in many places, a long time after peace was declared, I can tell you, Mr. Arthur. My husband knew this, and never suspected there was no foundation to my story.

"As we were shivering there in the cold and darkness, the grandfather came struggling up the path with the little child in his arms. He said he had discovered through her negro nurse, a plan of the unnatural foster parents to kill the baby and he had stolen her and brought her to us for safe-keeping until he could get his property sold and take her to Mexico.

"My husband never doubted the story, and believed the old man's surprise at our misfortune was sincere. We sat together on the log for a long time, talking of what it were best to do. The old man said he believed the time had come for us to quit



the place. My husband was now convinced that he had enemies who would complete his ruin, and he was willing to take the advice, but he had no money. The grandfather offered to give him enough to buy horses and a wagon and provide for our needs while on the trip, if we would take the baby with us and keep her until he could come for her. My husband did not want to have any hand in the matter, but I persuaded him. My words and the cries of the children finally overcame his scruples.

“All together we went to another village, and there we took the train for a town in Ohio, where we bought horses and a wagon. The old man accompanied us, for the day before our house had been burned he had left his son's home to go hunting, as had been his custom for years. No one would comment on his absence, nor would he be connected with the kidnapping. He directed us to go to Lexington, Ky., and wait there until he should come. Then he promised to settle us in a better home than the one we had lost for our part in saving the child. Oh, it was all carefully planned, but he reckoned without fate. We reached Lexington in due time, and wrote to the grandfather, sending the letter to his lawyer, as he had advised, to prevent it from

falling into his son's hands. The lawyer returned the letter, with the news that the old man had been drowned while coming home from a hunting trip in the mountains.

"Still I said nothing of my plotting with the old man to my husband for several years afterward. Believing fully the words of the grandfather, he said we must keep the child, even though we were so poor, until she was grown. When finally I told him, we had been living here some time, and every one regarded Milly as our child and he could not expose me. If we were to write to the uncle, he might put us in the penitentiary, and so he decided that he would save enough money to send Milly back to West Virginia and pay our way out West. But we never succeeded in doing this, for you know how unfortunate we have always been. Finally he abandoned that hope, and said when Milly was sixteen, we would tell her the story, and she might be able to think of some way of getting money enough to go home. We knew she would not betray us. On her sixteenth birthday we told her"—

"And why?" broke in Arthur, and then stopped.

"She refused to leave here, to write to her uncle, to do anything about it," said the woman.

"What reason did she give?" cried Arthur, blankly.

"None," she answered.

"But I know, Mr. Arthur," cried the man, his face illumined. "She loves us and does not want to expose us to any danger. She stood by us when our own children deserted us, and now stays on, working for us, lest she might bring sorrow to us."

Arthur's eyes were strangely drawn from the speaker to the woman propped up in the bed, and he gazed at her as if fascinated. She was looking at her husband with an expression of great pity, pity for the blind. She half unclosed her lips to speak, then leaned back her head on the pillow and turned her eyes to Arthur. He read in them the absolute denial of the words just spoken, and he found himself groping in the darkness for the reason of Milly's great refusal. He felt the woman's unspoken denial was correct, that Milly, with her ancient inheritance of culture and refinement, could never have loved these crude, uncleanly mountaineers sufficiently to cause her to continue to call herself their daughter when once in possession of the knowledge of her birthright. If not love for them—what?

"And now, Mr. Arthur," continued the woman,

her dull voice recalling him, "I have told you all. I wait for your judgment of me."

The words had a startling effect on the young man. In a flash he seemed to see what the life which this woman had aided in dragging her into had been for Milly. The long-past days of childhood swept before him; he saw her the accepted daughter of these poor mountaineers, the sister of their unkempt children; he beheld her pathetic figure in the school-room and the playground, openly avoided or barely tolerated, and then looked upon her in her young girlhood, shut out from the society of the community, toiling for the pittance which was grudgingly given her, and devoting it and the labor of her hands, all her spare time and attention to the sick woman who had helped bring about her misfortune, and the feeble old man who had no claim upon her. And she was the child of wealth and family, the equal, if not the superior, of those who had poured the bitterest drops into her cup of sorrow, and being such she had suffered the more deeply because of her ignorance of the truth.

And all this had happened to Milly—Milly—his Milly, as he had unconsciously come to look upon her—Milly who had stepped into the breach when

his grandmother's death had left him defenseless and who had silently held the place since, giving herself for him as she had done for these old people, Milly, with the quiet ways and the low voice, and the wonderful eyes, with the expression of soul-pain ever meeting him from their unplumbed depths—Milly! And this woman had done this thing to Milly, and now asked him for his judgment of her action.

His introverted eyes now came back and fell on the face among the pillows. It made him leap to his feet.

“My God! She is dead!” he cried.

He looked across the bed. The husband was on his knees, staring up at him.

“She read your judgment, Mr. Arthur, and it killed her,” he said, in a dull, monotonous voice.

“My judgment!” he cried. “What is my judgment, man? Am I God? What did it matter? She can't be dead! She has only fainted. Milly! O Milly!”

The girl slipped in, and seeing the face on the pillow, went swiftly and noiselessly to the old man's side.

“Come, father,” she said, half lifting him to his

feet. He suffered it, and without a second glance at the woman, without a tear or a moan for the one she had grown up under as her mother, she led him away, leaving Arthur alone with the dead.

After a time that seemed insufferably long to Arthur, Milly returned. Her composure had been disturbed by the uncontrollable grief of the old man and traces of it showed on her face and mien, but her voice held its customary quietness, as she said :

“ Father wants Dave and Polly sent for. Do you think Joe will go ? ”

“ I will attend to all that for you, ” said Arthur, conscious of the change in his attitude to the girl. He could not feel at ease in her presence, until he had grown accustomed to the facts revealed by the dead woman, and he welcomed the excuse for his immediate departure.

“ You know how to reach them ? ” she asked, going with him to the door. “ Dave lives in Alliston, and Polly is on Mr. Clay’s farm, ” she hastened to say, as Arthur did not reply.

Arthur’s hesitation was not due, however, to ignorance of the whereabouts of the old man’s son and daughter, but to surprise at his stupidity in ever having accredited the girl standing before him with

so lowly an origin. Familiar to him as was her face, why had he never seen that, except in its brownness, it was as totally unlike the man's and woman's she called her parents as was his own? Why had he never noticed the grace of her bearing and the inherent highbred expression of her countenance? How could he have been so dull of vision?

Thus he questioned as he passed swiftly up the green valley, again on the quest of the useful Joe. On his return to the Hall, he saddled his horse and rode in all haste to his mother's new home. Absorbed as she was in the cares of her family, the sympathetic woman left all to return with her son. As they rode back together, Arthur related the strange story he had heard that morning, leaving the woman aghast. But after the first moments of astonishment had passed, her acute mind darted immediately to the question which, at an earlier hour, had presented itself to him.

"Why, when Milly heard this story, did she not return to her uncle, or at least make some effort to communicate with him?" she inquired.

Arthur moved somewhat uneasily on his saddle. He would like to have said that affection and devotion for her foster parents would not permit her to

abandon them when they were so dependent upon her, but recollection of the expression on the face of the dying woman forbade the words.

"The old man thinks she loved them too well to leave them," he said.

"And what do you think?" she asked quickly, but it was unlike her son to give the opinion of another as a reason.

"Candidly, mother, I do not know what to think," he said slowly. "Milly was always beyond me. She is hopelessly so now. You remember her fastidiousness when she was a little girl regarding her toilet, and her love for pretty things, which characteristics marked her distinctly from her slovenly sister and careless mother? Nor has she parted with these as she has grown into womanhood. I have been thinking of many things concerning her since hearing her story, and among them is the marked preference Milly always showed, as a child, for the company of the people whom we now know were of her own class. When, as she grew older, she could not hope for this, she would have nothing less. Before Polly was married, Milly would always leave the place when her supposed sister's friends would visit her: and though it threw



the entire care of their parents upon her, I know she was glad when the boy and girl went to homes of their own and thus relieved her of their society. She had never visited them, and their friends are strangers to her. She must have suffered much because of their total lack of her own inborn refinement. Her life must often have been almost unbearable, if there were not a profound love for her parents to sustain her. And yet when she learned it was not the life into which she was born, when she knew wealth and position were waiting her elsewhere, she voluntarily remained in that poor cabin home, with no society except that old ignorant man and woman, who had done her irreparable wrong. Can you understand it, mother?"

Mrs. Long did not answer his question, but her eyes were fixed searchingly on his face. Then she said:

"It is strange Milly never said anything to you, after learning the truth concerning her birth."

Arthur rode on for a minute in deep thought; then he rejoined:

"Milly never talked about herself."

"Was she ever invited to do so?" asked the mother, a smile dimpling the still fair face. "Is it

not true, Arthur, it never occurred to you that Milly might have proven as interesting as, say, pretty Lucy Frazier?"

"I never thought about it," he answered, somewhat coolly.

"And yet," insisted the mother, "you owe something to Milly."

"More than I can ever hope to repay!" he exclaimed, suddenly, for the veil seemed to drop from his eyes, and he saw all that she had been to him, and the slight return he had made for it. And she had done this for him knowing who she was, and met his indifference with the same composure as she had met the acceptance by her foster parents as their right of the sacrifice of her life. Why? He turned his puzzled eyes toward his mother, and the perplexity on her face held him.

"Arthur," she said quickly, "there may not be a word of truth in the old woman's story!"

"Why, mother!" he cried, in surprise. "What purpose could she have in telling me a fairy tale with her dying breath?"

"But does it appear plausible to you, out here in the clear daylight?" she asked, leaning from her saddle and gazing at him intently. "The brothers

might have hated each other, one might have killed the other; the father might have had suspicions against his son, and, in the childishness of old age, might have wanted to put his grand-daughter beyond the reach of one he considered her enemy. But do you not think he would have taken some one, his lawyer for instance, into his confidence? that he would, at least, have left some paper where she was, before entrusting her to these people? But admitting that in his desire to keep her place of concealment an absolute secret, would not the uncle and aunt, who were so devoted to the child, have taken every pains to find her? Would they not have known the child could not have been spirited away, and hence instituted a wide search for her kidnapers? They must have been aware of the father's dislike and suspicion, since he was the avowed adherent of the other son. Knowing this, would they not naturally have associated him with the disappearance of the child? Some one must have known of his visit to the mountain house, for it is always true that God sets an eye to witness every deed, that is directed against the good of another.

“The burning of the house must have attracted attention, and in the face of their well-known pov-

erty, it must have struck some mind as strange, that its owners were able so soon and so speedily to take their departure. That they should do this on the very night of their loss, without saying farewell to friend or relation, might be attributed to fear of their enemies; but that they could do so without attempting to dispose of their land, stock and crop, would plainly read their having a supply of funds. Their departure and the disappearance of the child, occurring simultaneously, would surely be noted by some one. Once noted, once the suspicion had been born, it would assuredly have been accepted as truth, for that is characteristic of the human mind, under such circumstances. To follow them were the simplest of feats, for they had made no attempt to hide their tracks. And they would not have been across the borders of the State, before they would have been captured. No, Arthur, I must have something more for it than the old woman's word, before I accept this strange story—and I am not a lawyer!"

"Your conjectures are all good, mother," he admitted. "But what reason have you for thinking she would concoct such a story and tell it to me on her death-bed?"

"Remember, she waited until she was on her death-bed to tell it," suggested Mrs. Long, and then she answered his question: "Persons of low intelligence, Arthur, sometimes have strange aspirations; and in their efforts to see them realized they plan schemes that are gigantic for them, masterly for their superiors, when crowned with success. When failure attends them, as it mostly does because of their own colossal weight, then they are elephantine. It looks to me as if such will prove the scheme fashioned by the parents of Milly for their favorite child—and which, probably, she was willing to assist them in the carrying out," she added, under her breath.

The reaching of the gate that separated the shady lane that connected the Hall with the main road, interrupted their conversation, and prevented Arthur from catching the drift of his mother's concluding words. When once more they were riding side by side, he said:

"But there is nothing in the world easier than for me to ascertain the truth or falsity of the story, I have only to write to some lawyer in their home place and all doubts will be set at rest."

"And I advise you to do so, before you speak to

any one else of this," she counselled, and then a silence fell between them, because of the solemnity of the reason of her return to her first husband's home.

The old man was walking aimlessly around the yard, and seeing him, the kindly heart of Mrs. Long overflowed in tears. She went swiftly to his side, and taking the old hands in hers, poured out upon him the sympathy of a soul that had tasted deeply of the waters of bitterness.

"She was a good wife, Mrs. Long," he said. "We've been poor ever since the war, but we had each other. Now she is gone and I have nothing."

"Oh, yes you have!" she cried. "You have Milly and Arthur. They will never forsake you while they live."

"That is very true, Mrs. Long," he said, quickly. "No child could have been more to her own parents than Milly has been to us, and Mr. Arthur has been the best friend ever a man had. And yet they are and cannot be anything to me but strangers, and their goodness is the goodness of charity and not of affection. They could not be expected to love me, a poor, old ignorant mountaineer, and she did. That's the difference."

"And that is all the difference, poor man!" exclaimed the sympathetic woman, pressing his hands, as her thoughts went swiftly to her fond husband and loving children. "Only God can help you endure!"

"And he will! Oh, He will!" he cried, lifting his dim eyes trustfully to the cloudless sky, bending tenderly, dreamily above the reposeful land, the still houses, and the man and woman. "We never knew much about Him, according to the way of the church people, but we found Him somehow. Maybe it was by the road of sorrow which we have traveled mostly; but I like rather to think it was by the narrow little path of love which she and I walked in together, when sometimes our feet were let loose from the other way. But, in whichever it was, we found Him, and sometimes we saw the gleaming of His sinless robe, and it brought us comfort. And I know He is not going to forget me entirely, now that I am alone. But I must wait in patience for His coming."

As he was speaking, with the unconscious poetry of the child of nature, they had been walking slowly toward the house, Mrs. Long guiding his trembling steps. As she listened to the child-like expression

of trust in the Supreme, and her eyes rested on his broken frame and lined face, now illumined by the light of faith as a storm-scarred crag glows under the radiance of the setting sun, she could understand why the woman he mourned should have loved him, and believed that the goodness of the child he would not claim and the friend he called his master might have its roots in something deeper and sweeter than the charity of the stranger.

The door stood closed, but was now opened by Milly, and Mrs. Long saw that the young face was ashen unto ghastliness. As she entered the house, and a swift glance around the room revealed the girl's occupation of preparing the dead mother against the coming of her children, she drew the trembling Milly to her bosom, as she cried:

"Milly, darling! Why didn't you wait for me?"

"I did not know you were coming," she said, beginning to sob convulsively.

"Arthur should have had sense enough to tell you he had gone for me," she exclaimed. "There now, Milly, don't cry, poor child! Go to your room and lie down. You are completely worn out."

"Oh, no," she answered. "I do not mind now that you are here. I oughtn't to have minded at



all—but it was the first time, and the thought of her—alive, breathing, thinking, speaking two hours ago—and now—like that!”

She leaned against the log wall with her hands pressed over her breast, while the fathomless dark eyes seemed to grow into twice their natural size under the awfulness of the thought. Mrs. Long regarded her in momentary silence, as she asked herself if she needed better proof of the truth of the story Arthur had told than the attitude of the girl toward the dead. Not thus could a daughter have felt in this hour; not thus would have even spoken one who had loved the dead. Any feeling of sympathy she had experienced was now transformed into pity that one so young and so susceptible to this painful conception of the situation had had it thrust upon her alone in all its bare horror.

She said nothing further, but, turning to the duty before her, found that the hands of the girl had completed it. The dead woman already lay robed for the grave.

“Why, Milly, how have you done this?” gasped Mrs. Long, viewing the still figure in its soft black gown.

"It troubled her, ever since I can remember, the fear that she would not have good clothes when she was dead," said Milly, in a driven voice. "She use to say that all her people had gone to the grave decently clad, but she would have to wear one of those ugly shrouds they keep in the undertaking shops for the paupers. O, Mrs. Long! There have been some things so—so hideous!" cried the girl, swaying against the wall, her hands now clutched across her breast, her face haggard and old looking. "She would talk of that on spring mornings when the peach trees were in bloom and I had a freshly-ironed frock to wear to school; and she would talk of it on lonesome, wet autumn evenings when everything was—oh!"

One hand went up to the thin throat, and Mrs. Long sank into a chair at the foot of the bed and began to weep behind her handkerchief.

"She had so little," continued Milly, thrusting her emotions back into the cave in which they had hitherto been hidden, "and I believe that when she was a girl it was different. But she did not seem to mind her present loss so much as the fear of the greater loss, as she considered it, before her. I know her constant talk of it and the seeming cer-

tainty of its fulfillment made life more bitter for poor father. And so, when Miss Cora got the school for me the first term, I saved every cent of the money and bought everything she now has on for her, and that summer I made them up. She could not have been more grateful if I had given her a fortune. It brought father happiness, too, for he loved her more than himself. Of course her fear would not have been realized while I lived," concluded Milly, "but I could not make her think so, and so there was only this left for me to do. I have always since been glad I did it."

Mrs. Long said nothing. She had heard all of Milly's words, and was dimly conscious of their meaning; but what filled her mind was the cry of the misery of her whole life, which had been wrung from the ashen lips. Well she knew she was the first who had heard it, and in imagination she felt what this sublime repression must have cost the child, the girl, and the woman. No wonder, she thought, the human frame should stand there before her frayed, worn, fragile, with the soul constantly tearing against it for liberation from such a state of being; and less cause was there for surprise in the absence of all grief in the heart over

the death of the woman she had earlier called her mother. Forgive her the girl might have done for the anguish she had helped bring her, but feel for her the sentiment that would call up a tear or a sigh, she could not with the bleeding corpse of her own happiness chained to her memory.

Becoming aware, after a while, of the silence in the room, Mrs. Long withdrew her handkerchief and gazed for a moment at the girl standing against the wall, her great, dark eyes fixed vaguely on the still figure on the bed.

"Milly," she then said, slowly, wonderingly, "is the story which she told Arthur true?"

"Yes," she answered, listlessly.

"Have you proof other than her words?" inquired Mrs. Long.

"I have the certificate of my parents' marriage, my grandfather's book containing the date of my birth, their death, the name and address of my uncle, and a paper written by herself confirming the story. There are some other things, among them the letter which she wrote to my grandfather on reaching Lexington, and which was sent back by the lawyer. Yes, I have sufficient proofs, and besides, father confirmed the story, and he would not tell a falsehood."

"Why then, Milly, did you continue here, living this miserable life, when you could have returned to your own station, put away forever the wretchedness of this?" asked Mrs. Long.

"The other children were married then—they would have been alone—they were poor—and father could not work—they needed me—"

Her answer came in disjointed sentences, and after a fleeting glance at the questioning woman, the truthful eyes had been turned away.

"But Milly," pressed Arthur's mother, "had you gone to West Virginia and secured your property, you could have taken them there to live with you. You could still have been a daughter to them and given them more comforts than you were able to do here, and with less expenditure of your strength. At the same time you would have released yourself from an existence which I now see was terrible for such a nature as yours. Milly, have you truthfully answered me?"

The great dark eyes came back, wavered for a moment as they met the ones so like Arthur's; then the trembling knees sank under her frail weight. As she sank on the floor, she said brokenly:

"I have not."

"Can you not?" asked Mrs. Long, her motherly heart aching for the girl crouching on the floor. When no answer came, she said:

"Milly, will you tell me, his mother? is it because of Arthur?"

Her answer was the dropping of the thin brown face into the thin brown hands. A mother seldom meets such a confession with equanimity, especially when the child is her first born son. But all ungenerous feeling was swept from her heart, as she thought of the wonder of this girl's love; so perfect and pure it had never made one demand for itself, so silent that never once had the idea of its existence crossed the mind of its object, and yet so all-pervading and powerful that he had rested on it unconsciously and had never known heart-loneliness, even though parted from her, his mother.

"Milly," she said, very gently, very tenderly, "come to me, little girl!" and with a gush of the only happy tears she had ever known, Milly flung herself into the outstretched arms of 'Arthur's mother.

## CHAPTER XIII

As the days following the funeral wore away, and Milly did not break the silence between them regarding the story of her birth, nor give any indication of intending to seek his advice regarding her inheritance, Arthur was at first surprised, and then perplexed. Thinking that her natural reserve withheld her from approaching the subject, he opened the way that must have led to it, but either through lack of perception or because of remarkable astuteness in avoiding it, she always missed the opportunity. When he heard from one of the trustees that she had applied for her former position in the school, he was driven to seek counsel with his mother.

Yes, Milly had spoken to her, Mrs. Long said. Her father shrank from leaving here, where his wife was buried, and, as Milly could not go without him, she must perforce resume her work. It would not be for long that she would be detained

here, for the old man was hastening to join his loved one. There was time enough for her own affairs, Milly had said. The least she could do for him was freely to give these days to him; and Mrs. Long bade her son not to trouble himself about the matter at present. If Milly's claims were what she believed them to be, a year could not make any material difference, and by that time she would be relieved of all obligations to those with whom fate had thrown her.

Singularly enough Arthur found it not difficult to follow his mother's advice, for Milly and her affairs, unusual as the latter were, occupied a secondary place in his attention, for which fact blue-eyed Lucy Frazier was accountable.

His visits to her were being paid with a regularity that was driving Aunt Jenny to the verge of distraction because of the superstitious belief, as they were causing Mrs. Frazier an annoyance which threatened eventually to work more harmfully than the combined malice of the spirits whom the negroes feared. With the wit of an adept in the practice of feminine art, Lucy obeyed her mother in regard to Jasper, and at the same time secured her own pleasure by frequently seeing Arthur. While the



latter was aware of the calls of the former and her frequent little excursions with him, Jasper was totally ignorant of the visits paid by Arthur. Had he not been thus ignorant, he would have withdrawn, for there was too little of his heart in this seeking of the girl's society, to permit him to assume the character of a rival to his friend, who, in addition, was bound to him by the ties of relationship. Lucy realized this, and felt there existed no demand upon her honor or friendship to enlighten him. Moreover, the old haunting scene of Arthur's hatred of her Yankee race and birth could not be entirely shaken off, and while it remained, always should doubt have a lurking-place in her heart. When the awful time, of which this doubt was the foreshadow, should come upon her, she could not be quite alone who had the unexacting friendship of Jasper Long to turn to. Thus Lucy reasoned, as women before and since have done, adding thereby to the world's misery.

Arthur appeared to divine this doubt and it always angered him. It was not what he wanted, and he was one to grow unreasonable when his desires were thwarted. If during this period he had once met conscience face to face, he would have

admitted that Lucy was justified in so regarding him. He had entered on this friendship of later days at the instigation of the very hatred, in whose existence she held that lingering belief; nor could he, had such a moment of meeting been his, have truthfully declared that she had no ground for that belief to stand upon. In such periods, however, we guardedly keep out of the way of conscience, or promptly throttle her if she come upon us unaware. We are bent upon our chosen way, and come good, come ill, we will travel it to the end. Nor is such a course wholly blameworthy. Many so determined a soul thus snatches happiness from the hand of niggardly fate; or, failing, if fashioned of the best fibre, will find more joy from the ruins amid which he stands, than would have been his in the security of the fearful.

To Lucy as a human being Arthur would have been willing to accord the right to that feeling of distrust. It was as a woman, he denied it to her. Generations of fathers had handed down to him, strengthening it as it passed through their minds, the conviction that, though a man may doubt everything science has told or God revealed, a woman must doubt nothing. And, though as many genera-

tions of Lucy's mothers had ceased to veil their eyes, he was one of those who held they must still veil their minds.

Naturally the intercourse of two so divergent in almost every view, must have been tumultuous; and often Lucy, turning from the door through which he had passed, vowed never again to see him, and, as Arthur strode homeward through the starlight, he as often made the same declaration. The dawning of another sun, however, threw a different light upon the subject, the discussion of which had thrust them apart in anger; or the passage of days full of the ache of separation brought them to the realization of their folly in thus inflicting upon themselves and each other, because of a disputed theory whose existence or results in no way affected their lives.

After such a quarrel, whose violence was so great it might justly be regarded as fatal, Lucy came upon Arthur, standing by the white privet bush above the stream. It was late in the evening, that mystic, fleeting, unreal time when night stands tip-toe on the hills to unlatch the gateway of the stars.

Her father and mother had gone to the adjoining

county to attend the fair, taking the two younger children with them. Joe, who had driven them to the train in the morning, had shortly after sunset departed for Beechwood to meet them. Half way there he had encountered a neighbor who told him the engine had been overturned as the train was leaving the fairground, entailing a delay of at least two hours. To save his Lil'l Miss anxiety, Joe had turned back to relate to her what he had heard, then hastened to the town, for he had a countryman's uncertainty in regard to the arrival and departure of steam cars.

As she watched the carriage departing the second time, Lucy felt it was incumbent on her to carry the intelligence to Aunt Jenny, who was always uneasy when Joe drove the horses at night. She wore a simple white gown, caught at the waist with a broad blue sash, and thrust into her hair a spray of sweet verbena she broke from the border of the flower bed while passing. As she came down the hill the fragrance of the flower was borne to Arthur, standing by the brook.

All day he had been assailed by the thought of their estrangement, and, when evening sent him to the lonely house, the longing for reconciliation

grew into a mastering force. He tried to read, but the stillness of the library was oppressive. He went to the parlor, but the grave or smiling faces of his ancestors, looking down on him from the wall, seemed to mock him.

"Fool!" they said, "to come here, of all places, with your misery! Here where we danced and sang and made merry, here where we whispered words of love and plighted our marriage vows, here where our children played at our happy hearthstones and where later we smiled upon their youthful loves."

Here his father had lain in the solemn state of death, and here, in so short a time afterward, his mother had given herself to another. Worse than the silence of the library were the memories of the long parlor filled with the rich sunset light from the many deep-set windows. Thought of his room repelled him, while the rear veranda looked upon Milly's lowly home, on whose doorstep he knew, as was her custom, she was sitting.

Why should he not join Milly, he asked himself. Her low voice, responding to his words, would allay the fever of his heart, and her quiet presence subdue the tumult of his mind. He recalled her

story and remembered that the girl sitting there in the former home of one of his father's slaves was like himself, the inheritor of an ancient name, and, unlike him in this, heir to great possessions. Instead of returning to claim them, she kept her humble, painful position for the sake of a bereft old man. The heroism of the girl rose before him. He bowed before it, but notwithstanding his veneration, it could not draw him to her.

Then the dark beauty of her face and the unfathomed mystery of her gloomy eyes made appeal to him, and he vaguely wondered which parent in this did she resemble, the proud Virginian mother, or the father who had died by his brother's hand? Or was it the blending of races so dissimilar that had wrought this miracle on the countenance of their offspring? But though it seemed to be before him in the reality of flesh and blood, the beautiful face had not the power to move him.

Were they dead, he then asked himself, the uncle and aunt who had had the little child they had grown to love so strangely snatched away from them? If they were living, would they recognize her and welcome her when he took her home?

When he took her home? The words seemed to

touch a spring that swiftly shut off his world of musing and left him thoroughly aroused. When he took her home! Who had said he was to do this? Swiftly his thoughts ran over the past weeks, seeking the voice that had spoken them, the hour of their utterance. He could recall nothing, and yet they could not have come into his mind without having been suggested, could not have been accepted as a thing to be accomplished without long argument and convincing proof of the duty laid upon him to do so.

He take Milly home! What rank folly in the thought. What was she to him that any one should ever have entertained it? What was Milly to him? What had he said to his mother about owing her more than he could ever hope to repay? Did he mean these words? If so, why then should he not take Milly home? Rather, who but he should do it? Did others think so, too? Did she? Was that why she was waiting—for him to take her home?

There was a choking sensation in his throat, as surprising as the suggestions. Suppose she did, he was not forced to realize her expectations, and she might live in that cabin until the crack of doom

before he would do it. He to mix up in the affairs of that old mountaineer's daughter. Ah, but she was not his daughter, but the daughter of a house as ancient, perhaps, as his own, and of one now far richer. She had suffered deep wrong, and in all the world there was no one to right that wrong for her but he, Arthur Stanton. Duty—nay, was it not a privilege? That young poet Tennyson, of whose writings he was so fond, who were the heroes of his finest poems but those gallant knights of King Arthur's court, who "rode about redressing human wrongs?" And had he not once complained to Lucy—

From the dark-faced Milly, his peer in birth and station, from the possible knightly task before him, and the English poet's lofty themes, his mind rushed to the blue-eyed daughter of the hated Yankee intruder. The defiant little figure appeared to stand before him, the flushed face laughed mockingly upon him, as it had done a thousand times that day; and it swept through the door of forgetfulness all the thoughts that had so lately filled his mind.

What was she doing now? Was she wishing he would forgive her and come back, or was she out driving with Jasper? The last question rankled



like fire, because of its probability. Perhaps she was even entertaining him with the story of the quarrel. Perhaps the desire for reconciliation had no deeper hold on her than to bring him back for a renewal of the dispute. From the first day he had known her she had taken special delight in tormenting him, and then had laughed at his easily aroused wrath. And, though she had been oftenest the offender, he had always had to seek pardon. She had only to lift her penitent eyes—and how sincere was their penitence?—and he was back at her side. Was the play of childhood to become the earnest of maturity? He flung himself out of the house, not noticing Milly, in his blind wrath, as he hastened up the path to the orchard. He passed under its laden trees until he reached the wall, where he paused, and let his eyes wander over the hills and valley settling into deep, wistful silence in which they await the approach of night. The scene and the hour were not without their effect on him, and when some of their quiet was upon his young heart, he turned his eyes to the grassy path leading to the brookway around the foot of the hill, on the other side of which stood Lucy's home. Was she there and alone? Had the others gone to the

fair, as they had intended? Then she would not go out driving. Perhaps she was on the veranda with her ears bent for the first sound of the home-coming horses' feet. If only he could stand before her for a moment—what would she do? Would she admit she had been wrong and ask his pardon? Ah, would she even accept his advances toward reconciliation?

Almost unconsciously he had crossed the wall, and was walking toward the valley. The doorlight from Aunt Jenny's old house caught his eyes and stopped him. He did not want to go to Lucy's home ever again—certainly not now, when any minute might bring the family back from their outing. He glanced over his shoulder, but the sight of the hall, standing ghost-like in the gloaming, and perhaps the recollection of Milly on the step, sent him forward.

He would walk a little further up the valley, which was so still, so soothing. Nowhere had he ever met such an odor as filled this hollow at eventide. As a boy, when playing here with Lucy, the strangeness of it had often brought a sensation of fear to his heart as he thought that Uncle Major's explanation might possess something of truth, and the spirits of the dead Indians were offering prayer

and incense to their gods from the green knoll upon which the log house stood.

Though now he knew the natural cause of the refreshing scent which seemed to fill his being, he could not but wonder that it should be found almost overpowering in this spot, and be scarcely perceptible in other portions of the deep valley. From the recollection of Uncle Major's explanation to the legend connected with the place was but a step, and his mind, unloosed from the present, roamed freely through the past.

Was there a grain of truth in the story of this being the praying-ground of the Indians, he questioned. If it were, was his great ancestor aware of it, and to gain its possession, did he, as it was vaguely hinted by the blacks, kill the guarding brave he had found standing by the stream, where now the white privet grew? If he had done this, he had certainly done a sinful thing; and because of the poetical bent of his mind, Arthur felt that the God whom these untutored children of the forest worshipped, under however rude a form, by however rude a rite, might not have turned a deaf ear to their cries for vengeance upon the one who had stolen their temple from them and desecrated it,

especially when that one stood higher in the scale of being and held truer conceptions of the Divinity that both acknowledged.

Well, if he had wronged his red brothers, he and his descendants had paid the penalty. While they had prospered in one way for a time, they had lost in others. Loved father and promising son had been suddenly called to fill untimely graves. Tender mothers and loving daughters had suffered the loss of these, and woes more deep. With every joy the house had known, there seemed to walk a deeper shadow. For long they had been regarded as a marked race, and now of it only he remained.

And what did life portend, as it opened for him? He had made a standing place for himself, but it had been done by a struggle, and to advance meant a greater. He was alone and likely to remain so, for he could ask no woman to share his home, until it were free from debt, and placed beyond the chance of repeated poverty, were he ever so willing to marry. But he was not. He was too young to burden himself with the cares of marriage—and—besides—

His heart seemed to grow sore at the thought of the wife that was to come. He would have no

such thoughts, and he hurried onward, until the privet bush stopped him. It stood, so the negroes said, where the Indian watchman had fallen. Did his forefather's wife know of the cruel death of the Indian, and in her woman's love and pity, set this everliving monument above his grave? If that were so, would not the tenderness of the act have softened the punishment that had been meted out to her descendants? Would not her daughters at least have escaped? Because of it, was no woman spared? Would none be, not even the innocent stranger who had come to inherit it—not even Lil'l Miss?

He stretched out his hands.

"God," he cried, "spare her, at least!"

Driven back upon himself by the prayer he had made, here where he had sworn his unhallowed vow, he stood trembling in the stillness. Then over, or through the odor of the valley, he caught the faint scent of the perfume of the sweet verbenas, blown, he thought, to him from her garden. He turned his eyes to the hill and beheld the white-robed figure coming straight to him, the red flower showing like a star in the soft coils of her hair.

Through all his after life, Arthur had only to

close his eyes to see the darkling hill and the white-robed girl with the flower in her hair; but never could he feel again the rapture that flooded his heart as thus she came straight to him, not knowing he waited for her. When a movement of his attracted her attention, she gave a little startled scream, then laughed nervously, as she said:

"O, Arthur! How you frightened me!"

"Did I?" he said, striving for control of his voice and possessing himself of her hands.

"I thought you were the Indian ghost," she said lightly, but her voice was tremulous.

"Why should you? Don't you know it is only us it haunts? . . . Lucy!"

Both her hands were held closely in his, and as, after the pause following his question, he breathed her name, she vainly tried to fling off his clasp.

"Don't!" he commanded. "I can't stand it, Lucy—this way we are doing! It might be different. Can't it be, Lucy?"

The hands he held were trembling, but by a supreme effort of will, she answered calmly enough:

"I am not the whole cause of the trouble."

"Yes, you are!" he contradicted. "If you were only—" then he stopped short, under the tumult of his young emotions.

"Only what?" she asked, knowing, in a blind way, silence must not be.

"Nothing! If you were anything more, anything less, you would not be—Lucy—my Lucy!" and he drew her hands close to him until they almost rested on his breast.

"Let go my hands!" she pleaded.

"No," he said, holding them firmly and looking down on her with the boldness of one who knows his power; "no, not until you have asked my forgiveness for all the misery you have caused me these past few days—yes, all the days of my life, since the one that brought you to Stanton School in the white apron and blue sunbonnet. You've been the torture of my life, Lucy, and you'll make amends now, do you hear?" Say 'Forgive me, Arthur!' or I'll keep you prisoner forever."

Amid all the wild emotions of her heart, Lucy well knew she had only to speak one word of command, lift one glance of stern reproof, and Arthur Stanton would have obeyed, but to her own undoing and his, she found the new world they had plunged into too sweet to battle a way therefrom.

"I never learned such words," she retorted, defiantly.

"Then I'll teach you!" he cried, laughing down into her alarmed blue eyes. "Those sweet rebel lips—"

"Arthur," but his arms were around her, and the kiss, given and returned, joined their souls in an everlasting marriage, however widely fate should separate their mortal frames.

Then they were standing apart, looking at each other through the night that had swiftly descended upon them and the great still land. It rushed over him like the swirl of a tempest, the memory of the vow he had uttered in that place, to make her pay in her dearest coin for the humiliation she had put upon him in leaving him for Jasper Long, and he knew he had only to turn in that moment and go from her and the vow was fulfilled. But the slim girl standing there, with the suddenly paled face and eyes in which another and more familiar light was beginning to show, held him with hooks of steel, and he could more easily tear the wildly throbbing heart from his body and fling it into the stream before them than leave her side.

"I hate you, Arthur Stanton!" then Lucy cried, the words seeming to burn a pathway through the cool air.



"Lucy!" he pleaded, holding out his arms to her. "Lucy—you know you don't—and come to me, sweetheart!"

That was the one moment when their destiny was powerless before the effort of nature for her children, the moment when happiness stretched forth her hand to lead them down her way, the moment for their choosing, and the woman turned blindly from it. Her love bade her to bestow herself upon the life that called for her, and her pride held her back. "Let him woo, not command," it counseled. She turned to find the white path leading up the hill, when his hand fell heavily on her shoulder.

"Lucy," he said, roughly, "what do you mean?"

"What I said," she answered; but he felt her droop under his hand.

"How can you, Lucy—call your soul a liar—as you do, after that!" he cried, passionately, striving once more to clasp her to him.

But she stepped just beyond him, and clutched her hands fiercely behind her as she said:

"But I do—and myself, too."

"Why?" he asked, helplessly; but Lucy had turned once more, and her swift feet had carried her out into the gloom before he could again intercept

her flight. He followed quickly, fearful of the dangers the darkness might hold, and as he went there came back upon him the bitter recollection of all the times he had let her go home alone in the twilight because of his stiff-necked pride. He seemed again to see the lonely little figure of those long-gone evenings, as now he followed the white gleam of her dress on this, which should have been their bethrothal night.

Why had she left him, he questioned, long afterward, as leaning on her garden gate, he kept watch, knowing she was alone in the house. Why—after her kiss—how could she go after that—with the word of hate on her lips, that had told her love to his? Once those lips had lied—then, or after? Not then, never then, unless her soul itself were a lie! Why afterward, when truth were so sweet, so desirable, and untruth this; she there alone in the dark house, he here alone in the dark night?

He pondered on the question until the opening of the road gate announced the return of the family, and still thinking on it, he started for home. But not by the way he came would he return, for unconsciously there lingered on his mind the memory of Milly, whom he must pass in taking the other

path; so he struck across Mr. Frazier's land, until he reached the road. When he came to the gate opening to the lane, he paused to regard the school-house and playground, plainly seen by the light of the rising moon. Before him went the long procession of the days spent there and always was it Lucy who looked out from them, Lucy whom he had held in his lover's arms that night. Lucy, who had taken his first lover's kiss. It was inevitable this love, after that youth—but why had she turned from it after acknowledging it?

The question finally drove him home, and there sat with him throughout the night. It came to him at sometime during its passage, that the old doubt of him had been powerful enough to overcome the combined forces of their love, and he asked himself if he might expect ever to see it disarmed, when these had failed? Why should she doubt him, if she loved him—rather, how could she? Had she not knowledge sufficient to understand that, once love comes into the heart, it must cleanse it of every sentiment that does not reverence to the object of that love? Could she believe that Arthur Stanton could hold one thought of scorn for the girl he loved, daughter though she were of his most de-

tested foe? Or did doubt of him extend to doubt of his love? Might she have thought he was only feigning his to win hers? What was that but the fulfilling of his vow to humiliate her?—But what knew she of that vow, spoken to no mortal ear? But why, if none of these reasons held good, why had she cast him off?

All the following day the baffling question assailed him, and, when evening once more drove him to the sympathetic heart of the fields, they went with him, a troop of destroying fiends. He wandered on until he reached the privet bush, and there on the scene of it, reviewed the meeting and parting of the night before. Never did she look fairer than then in his memory of her, and the remembered abandon of her kiss strengthened his conviction that, whatever forbade her acknowledging it, Lucy's heart was all his own.

If he could only see her—Why should he not see her? Instantly he started up the hill, but he was met at the door by Lucy's little sister, who told him Lucy had had a headache all day, and was asleep now. Should she wake her? asked the child, lifting eyes so like Lucy's to him that he found his love for one daughter of the Yankee reaching out to em-

brace the other. Not for all the peace and happiness she had it in her power to give him would he disturb her, but as he turned back to his lonely home, he wondered if Lucy had suffered, too, and if the ache were more of the heart than of the head.

“Was there ever anything more foolish than this?” he exclaimed. “Here are we, a sensible man and woman, suffering all this misery, when we might instead be the happiest mortals. I shall write her a letter this night that will end it all.”

It was Arthur's first love letter and his last. As she read it in the seclusion of the orchard, where Joe, their ebonhued Mercury, had found her when he came to deliver it, so great a joy caught Lucy's soul she seemed to swoon before it. As pride demanded, he had wooed, and as love would have it, he commanded. On one page he was the suppliant, on the next the conquerer, and, through all, Arthur, wilful, exasperating, but always tender-hearted.

“What right had you to cause me all this misery, and give yourself a headache?—and I could bear the misery better than the thought of the headache.”

“Was it because I was rough, you flew from me, my little wild bird? That's the way of a man's love, I suppose, and I don't want to go that way,

for the thought of pain for you racks my soul. To my dying day I shall pray 'God, keep Lucy from pain!'

"Don't go to Aunt Jenny's so late, Lucy! You know you were always afraid in the dark—O! can you forgive me that I so often let you go home alone? Always I shall have this to reproach myself with—I let Lucy go home alone in the dark, when I knew she was afraid."

Such passages as these from his letter filled her eyes with a rain of tears and brought her fond kisses to the words. But when for the twentieth time she reread it, and grasped the full significance of its last postscript, the beautiful world faded, and gray-faced fear took its place before her.

Arthur's last lines read: "I shall be up this evening at half-past seven, and I want to find my sweetheart waiting for me at the door," and Jasper was to take tea with them that evening, and afterwards they were to go driving together. He was bringing home his span of horses from the fair, at which they had won the blue ribbon, and her mother had arranged the little entertainment in honor of the event. At this late hour Lucy could not alter the plan, and fear of her mother made her shrink from any attempt in that direction.

And what would Arthur think? He must not come without being informed of whom he should meet, and she went to the house to write an explanatory note. But when written the words looked so cold and heartless she tore up the pages and decided to let matters take their own course. As evening drew near, however, and she pictured the coming of Arthur upon the festive scene, knew the sense of intrusion that would be his, his embarrassment and hers, she decided she must do something to prevent it. She would see him, asking him to meet her at the privet bush.

He chose to find a different meaning in the nervously penned line, and it sent him to the brookway as one who treads on air. It was to be their secret for a little while. There should be no suspicions awakened, and their stolen meetings would be all the sweeter. It was quite possible that her parents did not want any lover as yet for their daughter, and if they knew of his existence, they would forbid her to see him. Or perhaps they had other plans for the future of this beautiful child of theirs. Perhaps there was some one else they had in view for a husband for her—the rich son of an old Yankee friend, perchance, and they, as

prejudiced against him as he was against them, would scorn to see her wedded to the descendant of the despised slaveholders. He would defeat them there. There was one victory for the rebel to wrest from the Yankee, and he laughed aloud in his joy.

Thus he came to her, standing in the gown he liked best, by the brook, and though her heart went to meet him, she moved never a pace forward. He went swiftly to her side and took her in his arms. Her head sank on his breast, and her complex emotions gained ascendancy and Lucy began to cry.

"Lucy!" he cried to her in a smothered voice, holding her more closely to him, and then he grew strangely still before the solemnity of her tears. God, prayed his soul, may they be the last she shall shed with me! A moment of tumultuous joy succeeded, and half roughly he lifted her face and rained on it the passion of his kisses.

"You do love me!" he cried triumphantly. "Why did you deny the truth that other night? Don't you know the fate of Sapphira, Lil'l Miss? O, my Lil'l Miss, forever more!"

The moments, freighted with an eternity of happiness, swept past; then Lucy said, lifting her head from its new resting-place:



"Do you know why I sent for you, Arthur?"

"Love made you," he answered, drinking deeply of the wondrous beauty of her eyes.

She shook her head, saying:

"Guess again."

Several answers he made, and then she said, innocently:

"Jasper is coming to take tea with us, and afterward I am going out driving with him. I didn't want you to be disappointed—"

It was the match to the gunpowder, and in the explosion that followed love and joy lay as the dead. It must have been the evil genius of the spot, for surely no two hearts that loved as they did could so suddenly thrust themselves apart for a cause so slight. When Lucy sought to explain, Arthur silenced her words; when he cried for pardon, she taunted him as only an angry woman can do. Then a boy's voice on the hill above them called:

"Lucy, come home!"

She moved a step forward, groping like the blind, when he caught her roughly and demanded:

"Will you obey me?"

"Never," she cried, wrenching herself free.

"Then go!" he cried, in wild rage. "And don't let me ever see your face again!"

He turned and strode away for a few paces; then the demon that ruled him in that hour, flung before him the remembrance of the vow made there. He would not suffer humiliation and defeat a second time. He stopped and looking back at the girl, laughed lightly.

"Don't take it to heart, Lil'l Miss!" he said, deliberately. "I was only fooling from the first. The Rebel wanted to get even with the Yankee—that's all!" and again he laughed and continued his way.

Half down the brook-path, his feet stumbled, and he fell forward, and for a long time lay motionless on the wet grass. When at length he rose, age seemed to have laid its cruel hand on mind and body. One thing only was plain for him—one thing that must be done that night—see Lucy. Wearily he groped his way back to the bush, and not finding her there, for he knew nothing of the flight of time, he climbed the hill. The little sister met him again at the door.

"Where's Lucy?" he said. "I must see Lucy!"

"You can't, Mr. Stanton, just now," said the

child, wondering at the strange look on the face of her unexpected visitor. "She's gone out driving with Mr. Long, and I don't know when they'll be back."

He gazed at her for a moment, not seeing her surprised face, nor the eyes so like the ones he loved. Then, without another word, he quitted the place. By the way he came he went back, but when he reached the brook, he paused, and like a madman shook his clenched fist in the empty air.

"You've won, curse you!" he shrieked to the invisible enemy in whom he at that moment believed. "You hunted us from the first to the last. Now that you have sunk my soul into the deepest hell of torture, are you satisfied, you Indian devil! are you satisfied?"

As he was staring into the void, he felt his eye drawn earthward, and even in such a moment, when complete possession by the fiercest hate left, it would seem, no room for other emotion, he knew a shaking fear, on beholding a dark figure, with supplicating hands raised heavenward, kneeling on the knoll sloping down from the old log house. Fear vanished, however, as this cry fell on his ears:

"Gord save me! Gord save me! O Gord save

me! Oh, save me dis time frum de ole Injun, an' I won't evah stay out late ag'in! O Gord, save me! Please, Gord, save dis po'r nigger boy!"

Arthur broke into a loud laugh.

"'Tisn't an Indian ghost, Joe!" he cried. "Only a white fool!" and he sprang across the brook, while the youth, struggling to his feet, hastened down to meet him.

"My Gord, Mistah Ahthuh! I ain't evah got seech a skeer in my life as you give me!" he exclaimed. "Foh what evah wus yoh standin' dah, shoutin' like dat an' shakin' yoh fist at dis po'r nigger, what's be'n yoh frien' al yoh life? 'Tain't faih, Mistah Ahthuh, 'tain't faih! I won't git ovah dis while I lib."

"You don't deserve to, you humbug!" said Arthur. "Didn't you tell Aunt Jenny you were going to prayer-meeting? And haven't you been over at Mr. Dalton's courting that saddle-colored girl again? Don't you deserve to be attacked by a sure enough Indian and killed outright for such wicked deception? I wanted to give you a fright. I supposed you would run home, but when you began to pray in that fashion, I thought you might awaken your grandmother. But if you don't mend your

ways, you will run into the Indian sometime, and it will not be good for you, if you do."

"I know it, an' I'se mighty keerful to keep out'n his ha'nt, what yoh an' Lil'l Miss ain't evah done in all yoh lives. Yoh bofe wasn't sat'sfied less'n yoh was plain' hyah, whar de ole Injun's berried, what yoh great-great-gran'-pap killed wif his gun, an' yoh ain't got no right to play on nobody's grabe. Granny, she allers said so, an' she said dah ain't no luck gwian to come from it, foh yoh an' Lil'l Miss seperated, foh she allers said dah ain't no good gwian to come uv yoh bein' frien's, an' it's all de workin' uv de Injuns what yoh great-great-gran'-pap runned outer dah meetin'-house, an' dat dey ain't gwian to stop dah workin' tell dey brung yoh to grief, as dey's done brung all de res' uv de fambly. Granny knows, foh she's got de secun' sight."

"I don't know but that is a fact, Joe," said Arthur. "Tonight I feel that all Aunt Jenny's prophecies are fulfilled. Tell her tomorrow, Joe, that you met me tonight by the white privet bush, and I sent her this word: The Indians have had their last revenge. Don't forget the words. You will not carry another message for me, boy."

So Arthur passed on. The meeting and conversation with the negro had settled the great tumult in his mind. He began to think more clearly and serenely. The idea of an occult interference in his destiny, he dismissed. If his family were followed by the results of an evil perpetrated by its founder, he neither accepted nor denied in that moment; he only saw what should have been apparent from the first; that, in the very nature of things, good could not come from the love between him and Lucy Frazier. Heat and cold, light and darkness, earth and water, could as readily meet and commingle as they to live in peace and amity. Circumstances of birth and position, difference in belief and training, yea, nature herself, had joined hands to keep them apart; and that they had not heeded these unmistakable warnings was the cause of all their misery.

He loved her. But had that love been strong enough to prevent his becoming savagely angry with her because she saw fit to refuse something which he regarded as his right? She loved him. Yet had her love been powerful enough to cause her to refuse the pleasure offered by Jasper Long, even though her mother should command it? To trust a

whole future of married life to a love so weak before the trivial demands of courtship, were like facing the untraversed ocean in a shallow boat, depending on fate and fair weather to sail in safety. Married to him, Lucy might become his tyrant, or he hers; and knowing himself, he felt the latter might befall, for what he cannot conquer by love, a man usually crushes by hate. He knew he never wanted to see Lucy's high spirit broken; neither could he bring himself to accept the place of the defeated.

In her was bound up all his soul's happiness—that he did not deny, and the briefest storm-tossed life with her were more to be desired than one of many years spent tranquilly without her. She held his life and his happiness, and throughout his future it would be to her he would turn in his thoughts, if he could not in reality, in all his aspirations for soul-joy and completion. Lucy was his, but as the water is the sun's, not to hold and have lest one or both should be destroyed.

With such thoughts, leading up to such conclusions, Arthur wandered farther down the brook-way, until the white walls of the Hall were before him in the star-light. He paused a moment and asked himself how it were possible to live there

and maintain those resolutions? If he walked this way, would not the memory of the intoxicating sweetness of their brief love-time prove too alluring? If he went in the opposite direction, he would meet the school-house with its more compelling remembrances. Lucy, the woman, might be withstood, but Lucy the child, the Lucy he had quarreled with and protected, loved and hated, she would conquer, though he wore a suit of steel.

He knew his love had in it a power which he had learned to fear even in the brief period it had held sway over him, and unless some unsurmountable barrier were set around it, it would carry him, in spite of himself, into the union which he held would be fatal for both. And where was such a barrier to be found in his limited existence? His work, he realized then, was not the work of his life, else in it he would have found the aid he sought. He might go away—thousands had done that in like circumstances, and in a new world not only had found security, but more than they had forsaken. But where could he go?

He had crossed the orchard wall and was walking down its path under the drooping branches of the fruitful trees. Emerging from their shadow, he



saw the Hall looming white and still before him, and beneath it, the log cabin, with Milly seated on its step.

He could take Milly home!

As if a voice spake them, the words came to his conscious mind, and they stopped him in his tracks. Take Milly home—and then—what? Return?—Nay!—Remain there? How?—As Milly's husband! Swifter than a lightning flash, questions were asked and answered, and Arthur Stanton read in them his destiny.

This was to be! For this strange family had come to his door, and lingered when so many others had gone their way. For this Milly had waited on, serving the man and woman who were not her parents, when deserted by their own children. For this had the repentant woman poured into his ears the girl's story with her dying breath. For this Milly had been fitting herself, in the preservation of inherited refinements, amid conditions the most disastrous to them. For this she had secured an education and continued to advance in mental culture in the face of the most discouraging hardships. For this she had elevated herself in the minds of those who beheld in her only the daughter of Ar-

thur Stanton's tenant, so that, when the hour of revelation came, she would not have to experience the humiliation of a change from a lowly position to one more exalted. For this all things had worked, and he saw it was for him to acknowledge this, and pass, by its means, out of the present conflict into a future of peace.

For one solemn moment he stood, and Fate, as if fearful of the soul, should it, in that moment, assert itself and wrench victory from defeat, shrank away, and his destiny was powerless before him. Where was the angel he had been taught to believe was at his side? Where was the love he had anchored his life to? Where was his soul? that Arthur Stanton should not hurl that moment's hesitation from him with the strength of man, born to rule, endowed with the power of knowing his good and turning aside from his evil? Where were the intuitions of the spirit—nay, the very instincts of nature, that he should stand there for that moment, and then go forward, and stopping where the girl sat, say:

“Milly, I will take you home!”

Alas, and still alas, that we are so soulless! Alas that we yield to a cowardly fate, and open our

breast for the undirected sorrow of disaster! But greatest cause for our bewailing, that we fail in our trust of love. Never did love come more truly than to the hearts of Arthur and Lucy Frazier, never was it more basely foresworn; and never did love more deeply avenge itself than on this man and woman whose story is here recorded. And though those who read may not heed it, according it no more than the fancies of another's brain, still is its truth the truth proclaimed from of old, that the voice of love should be heeded no matter from what neighborhood it calls, and followed no matter how long and dangerous the way.

At the words of Arthur, Milly rose and stood before him, looking at him with eyes that seemed to comprehend all the things of life, as they seemed to read the secrets of his soul, and the scales dropped from his own eyes, and he saw why Milly had stayed on. It was not fate, nor circumstance, nor affection for her foster-parents, but love for him that had kept her at his door; and he recalled the expression of pity for his ignorance of her husband that had shown on the face of the dying mother. The knowledge staggered him. He had not expected this—did he want it? .

He looked down into her dusk face and gloomy eyes, more mysterious than ever in the starlight, and the strange sense of quietude she had ever inspired, appeared to fold itself around him to draw him down into the unfathomed depths of the soul in which it had its dwelling-place; and Arthur Stanton knew that he shook that sense off with sudden alarm.

Though he would not permit himself to yield to it completely, he did not turn entirely from the influence, and under it all the emotions that had racked his being, grew still. Fatal this influence might ultimately prove, as the narcotic to which the sufferer turns for relief from pain, but he had not strength to withdraw from it because of the release it brought from the stinging whips of the hour.

For another while the silence hung between them, then he said:

"It is as your husband I wish to take you home, Milly—will you let me?"

He knew her answer before she gave it, for when had Milly said "No" to a request of his? But he did not take her in his arms and kiss her—Lucy had stolen all love's caresses—and yet he did not want to go away. The only place for him, be-

yond this spot with her, was the uninhabited house, with its memories too many and too strong for him to venture there alone. Their conversation was fragmentary, the words trailing off into long silences. Only once was the silence broken by Milly, who said :

“ You are certain you will not regret it, Arthur, no matter what shall come ? ”

His mind swept the past at her words, and he knew, come what might, no future could be worse.

“ I shall not regret it, Milly,” he answered, “ nor shall you.”

Midnight was in the sky before they separated. But when Arthur was alone in the Hall, singularly enough it was not of the tragedy of the evening he thought, but of Milly. How could he have been so blind to the fact of her love, when it was made patent by the most commonplace things of his life? How could he have been so dull when her presence pervaded the place, and the work of her hands—work for him!—was everywhere present? He could not say he was unconscious of this, and why had he not sought for the cause? And she had done this all this time, without any hope of reward—and could he say the reward for such devotion and

love had come in the mere asking her to be his wife? Rather had it not opened for her a world of even greater service, as barren of results as the past had been?

Her love had enfolded his life for years and only God could determine how much of the uprightness which he prided himself on were due to that enfolding love, for, if strong enough to sustain the hungry woman-heart, it were surely powerful enough to drive off all dangers that might threaten him. Was it not the sense of Milly's nearness that had made it possible for him to venture home, night after night, when the death of his grandmother, his one friend, the inspiring influence of his life, had been taken from him?

Was it not the feeling of Milly's unchangeableness in a world of change, that had held some of his old sentiments and beliefs to their anchorage? Was it not the unconscious thought of Milly that had made him not wholly desperate under the calamity of the night? And was it not Milly who was now leading him out of a present that was unbearable to a future of promise?

He had no love for her—no—but he had something deeper, something for which there was no ex-

pression, but which manifested itself in this deep serenity and feeling of security!

And while Lucy tossed on the pillow, wet with her passionate and repentant tears, Arthur sank into a dreamless slumber, with the thought of Milly dominating his soul.

But never does morning show the events of the previous day in the colors they wore at night, and on waking and realizing what had happened, what he had done, Arthur Stanton knew that he had acted the part of a madman, for love came in at daybreak, wild and surging love for the woman who was not to be his wife.

Soon afterward Joe brought him a pitiful, tear-blotted note from Lucy, pleading for forgiveness, the first such cry she had made in her proud young life; for the little sister had told her of Arthur's visit and her heart ached more for him than for herself.

He read it, clutching to the table for support, while the negro watched him, with alarm in his round eyes. Then, mechanically, he drew to him pen and paper, and wrote:

"Last night I asked Milly to be my wife."

It was noon before he appeared in Milly's home.

He found the old man alone, for Milly's duties at the school had called her away at an early hour. When he heard what Arthur had come to say, the old man cried :

“ Now I can go in peace, knowing my little girl has found the reward for her goodness.”

From that hour he began visibly to fail, and the story of Arthur's engagement to Milly, whose history outrivaled the wildest romance, was not a week old, until the old man was laid beside his wife. A few days later Arthur and his bride left for West Virginia to claim her inheritance and begin their new life, while Lucy Frazier lay on a bed of fever, from which the physician feared she would never rise.



## CHAPTER XIV.

LONG the fight between the life held in the frail body of Lucy Frazier and ever-ready Death lasted. In the end, life triumphed, and Lucy was led back to the world she would gladly have quitted.

“Let me die, God! Let me die!” she prayed, after reading the line Arthur had written, and still was that her prayer when the doctor said to the grief-stricken parents, “She will live!” But afterward they knew it was only the body that lived, and as day succeeded day, and weeks slipped into weeks, they asked themselves if it were not better that Lucy’s prayer, instead of theirs, had been granted. Vainly her young friends strove to win her back to the pleasures she once had held dear, for she knew she would only be the skeleton at the feast. Her heart was as dead as last year’s leaves, and it were folly to hope to resurrect it. When her parents would have forced her out of her seclusion, she turned upon them like a wounded tigress, and hurling at them the terrible truth that they were the prime

cause of what had come to her, and now they as well as she must bear the consequences, she silenced them effectively. We may sit by the wayside and make our moan if we will, but we need not expect the world will pause forever to listen to our outcry. After the novelty of Lucy's romance wore off, or the sympathy of her friends was exhausted, her little world went its way and Lucy was forgotten. Her parents accepted the situation, and turned to their younger children for what she had denied them.

There were then only left to Lucy, the two old negroes in the log house and Miss Cora. Little could the former, dependents upon her feeble strength, do for her, but bewail the misfortune of their idol, heap malediction upon the stranger who had helped to bring it about, and blame the dead, savage and civilized, for their primal part in the misery they had been forced to witness. Miss Cora was more helpful. To her, afterward, Lucy had confided the secret which the community had partly surmised, but the woman, whose affections served only as the oil for the lamp of the intellect, wept tears of deepest sorrow as she held the heartbroken girl to her bosom. But after that first moment,

weakness no more marked the conduct of Miss Cora. Sympathy is good, but succor is better, and this she would bring to Lucy. What had made up the happiness of life was forever lost to her, but life still remained, and why not make it a blessing to others instead of a curse to herself? When Lucy asked how this could be done, Miss Cora pointed to the little school-room across the road.

And thus was Miss Cora's early wish that Lucy might be associated with her in the work of Stanton School, accomplished. A year passed, and then the end came for Aunt Jenny. As she lay a corpse, the neighborhood was shocked by the intelligence that Stanton Hall had been sold, and Arthur had returned to close up the transfer of the property.

The funeral of Aunt Jenny was something to go down in the negro history of the community, for never had one so splendid been witnessed. In the fine garments for which she had ever had so true a feminine regard, the poor old black body, that had encased a heart so white, was robed, and the narrow couch that was to be hers for all time might have served for her masters in the palmiest days of their house, while the relatives rode in the best carriages the town afforded. The Frazier family were

present at the services, and Lucy and Miss Cora followed the remains to the graveyard. As the mourners entered the burial-ground, a thrill of surprise was felt, on beholding Arthur Stanton standing by the open grave. As he descended from the carriage, leaning heavily on the arm of the faithful Joe, and saw before him the sole survivor of the family she had loved with the depth and fidelity of the Southern slave, Uncle Major's feeble strength forsook him, and he fell to his knees, crying:

"Marse! Marse! Dey's only us two lef!"

Arthur stooped and raised the trembling form.

"And it won't be for long, Uncle Major, till we join the others," he said, the tears he could not shed blistering his eyelids.

"An' I'se gwine to my da'tah's—I'se got to leave the log-house—an' Lil'l Miss!" cried the old man, in a voice only the ear close to him could hear. "An' who's now lef' foh Lil'l Miss?"

"God, Uncle Major! Remember that, and don't worry! There's God for you and me and Lil'l Miss—and such unhappy ones as we are."

Lucy, not knowing what was transpiring, had been coming forward through the passage the respectful crowd had made for her; then, seeing

Uncle Major's companion, she stopped short, with a broken cry on her lips. Miss Cora, who was at her side, took her arm, and led her onward; for, brought there from curiosity or other motive, she had caught sight of many white faces among the dark-hued ones. Trembling, white as the handkerchief she clutched in her hand, Lucy crept up and took her place on the other side of the grave. Then feeling his eyes, she lifted hers, and for a moment, long as eternity, the man and woman looked at each other across the open grave. And Lucy saw, what she had known it would do, that his marriage had ruined Arthur.

"Had it only been Sylva," she had often cried, when her own grief, having been put away, she could think of him, "had it only been Sylva, he might not have been any happier, but at least he would not have been wholly lost. Milly will be his ruin. The deeps of her nature are the deeps of a cavern, no life, no light, no hope, and the farther he sinks into it, the closer does the death of all, but animal existence, draw near."

Looking now upon his face, she read the confirmation of her belief; then everything was forgotten in the grief that swept over her, as the wail

of affectionate hearts told her they were hiding her old Aunt Jenny from her forever. When all but them had gone away, Arthur crossed to where Miss Cora and Lucy stood.

"A' strange meeting place!" he cried, and while tears blinded her eyes, Miss Cora asked herself if this dry voice were the clear full one she so well remembered, if this old man were the boy she had instructed. "And yet a fitting one! She loved us, Lucy, and tried, in her poor way, to spare us from what has come to us. Lucy, I may speak to you now, as I could speak, were you or I lying on our death-bed, for we shall meet no more this side of eternity.

"Stanton Hall is sold—a stranger shall now live in the home of my forefathers—do you know why it is sold? To keep myself and Milly from starvation. There was no truth in the story her parents told me. The child had been stolen, as they said, by a crazy grandfather, and given to them to carry away; but her uncle overtook them and brought her home. Not deeming the grandfather had obtained possession of the certificates and other papers, he did not search their belongings, nor did the uncle have them arrested, as he wished to avoid giving

publicity to the affair. The girl is living and married, and I was shown proof indisputable of the fraud that had been practiced upon me. Milly is the child of the man and woman we knew as her father and mother, as proof as indisputable prove. The strange beauty which made her so unlike the other members of the family, was inherited from her maternal grandmother, as several cousins showed.

“Her parents knew me better than I knew myself, and calculated I would readily accept their story, because my friendship for Milly would prompt me to desire the truth of what they told; and they trusted the rest to fate; and fate favored them—as she would favor anyone against me.”

“But Milly?” gasped Miss Cora, affection for the girl tugging at her heart. “Did she know?”

“Who—Milly?” he asked, in mild surprise. “Do you think Milly would have deceived me, Miss Cora? No, she did not know—does not know. When I learned the truth, I took her away from the place. I told her there were not sufficient proofs to establish her claim and the property was not valuable enough to go to law about. We went to a town in New York. I bought a small house

there, with the money I had saved; but somehow I had no inclination to continue my profession. I got a clerkship in a grocery store; then, an opportunity came to buy out the business, and I decided to sell the Hall and invest it in the concern."

"Have you any children?" asked Miss Cora.

"No—thank God! I think—I couldn't—endure that," he said.

Then silence fell. It finally drew Miss Cora's attention from her sad thoughts. As she glanced at Lucy's frozen face, the wild blue eyes fixed on Arthur, took in the passion of his set lips, she cried:

"Lucy! Arthur!—O, children what have you done!" for Lucy was in Arthur's arms, and his wild kisses were falling on her white lips.

"It's farewell, Miss Cora, for all time!" he cried, defiantly. "O, my God! maybe for all eternity! Lucy! Lucy! say you will meet me there—be mine there—O, my Lil'l Miss!"

His unclasped arms let her fall backward, but Miss Cora took the swaying figure into hers.

"Come away, Lucy! Come, my darling! O, Arthur! my poor boy, good-bye!" She led the half-fainting girl to the buggy, in which they had come, leaving Arthur lying on the grass by Aunt Jenny's grave.



An hour crept by and then Arthur raised himself from his place on the trodden grass, and gazed around. When freedom had cast them forth from their old homes and the little burial grounds where they had expected to rest with their parents, the negroes had purchased a few acres of poor land on the outskirts of their settlement, and with pathetic patience they had striven to adorn it after the fashion of the white people.

A few struggling cedar shrubs now met Arthur's eyes, and one or two small tombstones showed, solitary and white, among the many low beds on which nature but niggardly bestowed her green covering. On the more recently made graves were some withered common flowers, while broken vases and old cracked china cups were eloquent of remembrance of the sentiments of the departed.

As he gazed on the scene, never so desolate as under the dying day, Arthur's face grew dark. A sense of the finality of things as far as they concerned him, smote his soul, when in this hour he was alone among the graves of the servants of his people. He rose stiffly, conscious of the deepening twilight and the distance that lay between him and the Hall, where he was to spend his last night. Once

more he looked around at the place where she had stood, and saw a white object on the ground. He picked it up—Lucy's tear-wet handkerchief, thrust it into his breast-pocket, and as he went blindly forward, he remembered it was all of hers that he had.

He avoided the town, on whose streets he must meet his friends and former associates, thereby adding fully two miles to his walk. Night had settled deeply on the land, when he reached the hill overlooking the log house in the hollow, now silent and deserted. He diverged from the path across the ridge, and turned toward it, possessed of a fancy once more to enter it.

The door was ajar, the room empty, for during the day kind hands had been busy in removing Uncle Major's few belongings to his new home with his daughter. Arthur pushed himself in between the door and the sill, and stood peering through the gloom that enfolded the room. There was not a sound, not even a mouse stirred, and an old boyish fear of a vacant house at eventide came in and sat heavily upon his heart. He would be gone, he told himself. It was an evil place for him, but he lingered, the while his mind tried to pierce the mystery

of the past, even as his eyes strove to pierce the obscurity of the apartment.

This was the first home of the Stantons in the new country they had come to conquer. It was here his great-great-grandfather had lived, here his children had been born, and here he had died. Arthur, groping his way to the hearthstone and finding a forgotten chair sat down. Had he been happy in his rude home in the forest, that forefather of his, he wondered, or did never a shadow of the grim future of his descendants cast itself upon his path? He recalled the statement often made by the dead negress, regarding him: "An unthinking man," she had called him, and he felt he had entertained only high hopes for his happiness and prosperity of those who were to succeed him. Did he plan for his children's children? Did he see them in his dreams, owners of vast plantations, possessors of high honors, the mighty men of their day? If so, what must he now endure, if he beheld the last of his line without one further claim upon the State he had helped to found, a stranger in the home he had built? Can they see what is transpiring here, they who have gone before? He hoped not, for the sake of his proud grandmother.

Minutes slipped away. Many times he told himself he ought to be going, and yet the place held him. Finally he asked himself why should he not spend the last night here, the last of the Stantons, in the house the first one had founded? It appeared eminently proper that he should do so—here hold his final communion with the past, the past he had known and that other past which belonged to his line. For this night he would set himself free from the present and the future to which it would give birth. Tonight he was not the small storekeeper in a Yankee town, but the son of an old Southern house; tonight, not a man cruelly wronged by Fate, but one with the world before him; tonight, not the husband of Milly but the lover of Lucy Frazier. At dawn tomorrow he would go forth from the log-house, closing its door after him, nor would he once look back, until should appear the mighty angel with the sleep-evoking wand, then, ere it should lightly fall to bless his tired eyes, he would turn one glance of farewell to his past which he would dwell in for this night only. In this night he would solemnly and for the last time question Fate regarding her malice toward him. Perhaps in the silence of this room she would

give her long-withheld answer, and it might be such that he would find in it comfort for the remainder of the way. Thus he thought and acted, until over-taxed nature yielded, and Arthur slept in the old chair.

It was midnight when another crept toward the house in the hollow. Stealthily, pausing, often with ear on the alert for the least sound, he drew near until the end of the house was reached, when he kneeled and something large and white was placed close to the logs. Then a light suddenly broke upon the darkness, revealing the set black face of Joe, before it was borne down to the paper and shavings.

The sleeper in the chair moved at the striking of the match, and murmured, "I'm coming, Lil'l Miss!" while the negro rose and looking from the upleaping flames to the house above him, said:

"Yoh caused all ouh trouble—Granny said so all huh life. An' yoh ain't done enough to us but yoh mus' go an' trouble Lil'l Miss. But yoh won't hu't huh no moh'n us—what's lef' uv us. Wisht to Gord I'd done dis de fus' time I heerd uv yoh wickit-ness! Wisht to Gord I'd given de ole Injuns back dah place, 'foh dey'd hu'ted Marse Ahthuh an' Lil'l Miss, even if it did leave Granny without huh home.

She's got to do without it now, an' she wuz miserable in it at de en'. So now burn, burn, yoh wickit ole house! Burn down to de debbils what's burried in de groun'! Burn, I say! Burn!" and he thrust his boot viciously into the flames.

It did not require the command of Joe, and soon the red tongues of the fire were licking the well-seasoned logs. As the light grew, alarm seized him. Surely all the world must see that blaze! It would draw them to the place, and he had heard of negroes being sent to the penitentiary for such an act. He hastened across the knoll, and, hiding behind the white privet, continued to watch the angry flames, mounting higher and higher into the darkness of the night.

When the roof caught, the dry clapboards began to burn like straw. From the magnificence of the burning roof, his eyes were drawn to the window, and a shriek of terror in his heart, as he beheld the figure of a man, blindly beating at the panes of glass.

"It's de Ole Marse entiahly!" thought Joe, bounding to his feet, and turning his face toward the hill, beyond which was the safety of Mr. Frazier's barn. Curiosity, overcoming ghostly fear,

caused him to glance back before beginning his wild flight, and the shriek that came to him above the crackling of the flames told him it was no ghost imprisoned there, but a creature of flesh and blood.

“My Gord! It’s sure enough man!” he exclaimed, flying to the house. When he caught a glimpse of the anguished face of Arthur, he stopped like one stricken by death.

“Help! Help!” cried Arthur’s feeble voice.

With a bound Joe was at his side, and wrenching down the old window sash, flung his arms around Arthur, and dragging him from the burning house, carried him to the white privet bush.

For a moment Arthur lay like one dead, his face ghastly under the lurid light, his eyes wide and staring; then he sat up and silencing Joe with a gesture, watched the flames fast enveloping the log house. And watching, he lived over that awful period through which he had passed.

When he had broken from the deep sleep that had overtaken him, and opened his eyes to find the tongue of the fire almost licking his face, a paralysis seemed to seize him, a paralysis not less of brain than of muscle. He knew that he was in the cabin, and that it was on fire, that he, the last of the Stan-

tons, was perishing in the cursed home his ancestor had built on the burial ground of the Indians. His lips formed the word,

“Kismet.”

Then like a mighty giant the subconscious forces leaped to the rescue. He bounded from the chair, and choking for breath, burning with the terrible heat he beat his way to the window, nor did he know even then how madly he had battered at the glass, how wildly he had cried for help. For in that awful moment the soul of Arthur Stanton entered into judgment. Without a vestige of disguise he saw himself, and knew he was a weakling, and more fiercely than the breath of the flames upon his face, did that knowledge burn his soul. He saw the pride in which he had shrouded himself was but the cloak of a coward. The hours in which destiny had stood powerless before him had he but been a man rose up like accusing angels. He saw his wanton destruction of the fair promise of life, and knew eternal damnation waited for him when this judgment was past.

“God!” he had cried. “One more chance, for Christ’s sake!”

Then he had felt a pair of strong hands upon his



arms, and coming back to the obvious, had seen the black face on the other side of the sill.

He was fully conscious, though he had allowed Joe to carry him to the privet bush, for with the coming of redemption for himself, had beaten upon him the thought of Lucy. He had been saved—yes, he knew that, and it was not of the rescue of his body he was alone thinking—but how should she be saved? And he had destroyed her life, perchance as his own youth! Little wonder then that the soul that had looked upon eternity, should seem to cease to animate the human world, face to face with that terrible knowledge.

Higher and higher leaped the flames toward the starry sky, and the crackling of the timber sounded preternaturally loud upon the silence of the night. Still Arthur Stanton moved not, nor unclosed his lips. He was conscious of his re-birth. As the fire burned pitilessly away the solid logs, he found the things of the old life being cast aside, and a strength coming into him that impelled him to spring to his feet, and shout the victory of his manhood to the stars. Then as the black volumes of smoke would burst from the little window and back door, would form over him the memory of Lucy whom he loved,

Milly, who loved him. On the chimney a trumpet vine had lifted itself, and as a great arm of the fire reached up to draw it into the ruin of the house, Arthur rose to his feet. From Lucy he was parted as irrevocably as from that life which had been burned down in the old house; but Milly was his wife, and had passed through that fiery ordeal, and stood still by his side. She seemed to be an actual presence, glorified by the shining light of her love, and humbly his spirit held out its arms to embrace her. There was a crash, the roof fell into the seething flames, sending up a shower of sparks.

“Marse Ahthuh, de dawgs air barkin’, at Marse Frashur’s, an’ he’s gwian to riz up presun’ly to see what ails ’em, an’ ef he done come down an katches us hyah”——

Joe spoke hesitatingly, then stopped, for Arthur had turned his face, looking strangely altered under the light, upon him.

“Did you set the cabin on fire?” he asked.

“Yes!”

Arthur thought of a dog, driven to bay, snapping, as the negro threw out that one word.

“Come on!” then said the white man, and without another glance toward the seething mass of

flames he turned into the brook path that led to Stanton Hall. Joe walked doggedly after.

"I sut fiah to de cabin, an' I'd do it again," he began. "Wish't to Gord I'd done it long time ago, an' mebbe de ole Injuns would a-let us 'lone. Granny allus said 'twas de cabin brung all de bad luck, 'caus'n de ole Marse entiahly pet it whah he did. Why mus' de ole debbil's pet de hoodoo on us what ain't evah had nothin' to do wif de cabin,—an' Lil'l Miss? Po' Lil'l Miss, what ain't lik huh-se'f no moh! An' what's she gwian to do now when she ain't even got Granny an' de cabin! Huh pappy an' huh mammy, 'dey doan keer foh huh no mo', an' huh frien's dey's all fallin' away frum huh! What's Lil'l Miss done to de ole Injuns, I wan' tu know? An' so I hid de papah an' de shavin's in de bahn las' night an' when I come bac' frum de funahl, I tell 'em I ain't gwian to be home tonight, as I reck'n gran-pop'll want me, an' I go an' tak de papah an' shavin's frum de bahn, when it's da'k, an' come down an' sot de cabin a-fiah. An' de ole debbil Injuns tried to do dah wuss luck an' buhn yoh up; but I seed yoh, an' I brung yoh up out'er de dangah. I cheated de ole debbils—an' I buhned de cabin! Dey cayn't evah huht yoh no mo', Marse A'thuh—but Lil'l Miss, po, Lil'l Miss!"

The soft voice, sometimes with notes of triumph, sometimes with notes of pain, flowed over Arthur's ears, and every word fell like blows upon his brain. His breath came heavily at times, and the cry for mercy reached up to his lips; still he spoke no word nor paused once in his swift walk. It brought them soon to the Hall. "You will find some candles in my bed-room," he said to Joe, as he unlocked the door. "Bring me a light to the library."

He groped his way across the hall to the library door, but paused there until Joe appeared with the candles.

"Do not go away," he then said. "I think I shall want you before morning."

He entered the room, placed the candle on the table, and then walking to one of the book-cases gazed for a long time at the well-bound volumes.

"I thought I was a philosopher, I believed I was a Christian," he said half aloud, and, with a curl on his lip, turned on his heel and came back to the table. He sat down and drew to him pen and paper.

"Dear Lucy," he wrote. "Joe did not go to Uncle Major tonight, as he said. He hid in the barn and when it was dark, went down and set fire

to the log house. I had come home through the fields and passing it, was drawn to enter, and following a whim, decided to spend my last night in Kentucky in the first home of my ancestors. I fell asleep in the chair. When I awoke, the whole place was on fire. I reached the window. Joe saw or heard me—I believe I cried for help—and I escaped.

“When I looked death in the face, I saw myself as I am—or may I say, was? I will spare myself the humiliation of revealing that picture to you. You must be familiar with it, unless——

“But I am that man no more. I shall not sell the Hall! Nor shall I remain in that country home in New York. I shall go to some large city, and engage in my profession of law. I may not achieve wealth or fame, but I shall redeem the honor and the courage of my race, that it took the grasp of death in its most terrible form to drag up from the depth in which I had cravenly buried them. When I shall have proven myself not altogether unworthy of the woman who went down to the door of death to give me life, and I feel that life drawing to its close, I shall return to the home of my fathers to await the end.

“This is your right to know.

“ARTHUR.”

## CHAPTER XV

AT noon the next day, when Arthur's train was bearing him to his new life, Joe laid the letter in Lucy's hand. She read it, and her spirit seemed to go down before the words. As in a vision she saw him cleaving a high and shining way to the goal that life had thus unexpectedly set before his eyes; and knew it was a future in which she should have no part.

"I can not follow you, Arthur," she cried piteously, and hid her face in her hands.

"Blood will tell—always, always," said Miss Cora, when Lucy told her what Arthur had written her concerning himself. "Blood will tell," she repeated, as if to herself, and Lucy felt a white heat running through her veins. The old proud spirit, the unaccountable hate that had inspired her against these people seemed to leap back into her heart, and she felt the misery that had enfolded her life being rent asunder. Her soul seemed to stand naked

before her, and she blushed for the shame of her folly, her sin. Then her womanhood rose up, and wrapped around it the shining garment of purification, and Lucy saw her own way lying before her, a narrow, hard, but a straight white way, and, with a strange joy pervading her being, she set her feet upon it.

Two years passed. Joe, supreme master of the Hall, was bestowing upon the land a care that was increasing its value and future productiveness. No crops were planted, but the seed of the heavy blue grass, carefully gathered was sown back upon the land, and the money Arthur allowed him was largely expended upon the purchase of fertilizers, for the worn-out fields and neglected places, while stones were carefully gathered for the repair of the rock fences, and the dead-wood that had been allowed to cumber the trees was removed, stumps were leveled, and sapplings set out. Arthur would come back some day, so he had promised, and Joe's one ambition in life was to hand over to him the remnant of the plantation in a condition that would make it as valuable as the acres his grandfather had possessed.

The life of the community flowed on in a cur-

rent that to the unthinking observer might appear sluggish; but to the individuals comprising it, the aspect was entirely different. Love, hate, hope, despair—the old struggle works out in each human breast, and call no life uninteresting, because the outward appearances are calm.

Love came to Sylva, a love totally dissimilar from the romantic attachment she had felt for Arthur Stanton, and, casting aside the traditions of her class, she had given herself to Miss Cora's iconoclastic nephew, and her suddenly developed democracy proved nearly the undoing of her mother. A healthy grandson, however, speedily kicked down all the stately dame's barriers, and the bright political aspect of her son-in-law's future, completed her resignation to her daughter's choice of a life partner.

When her own awakening had come to Lucy, she looked from her circumscribed life to the great world beyond, and a wild, impassioned longing seemed to drive her into it. Out there forgetfulness would be easier, and before she could live this new life, memory must be killed. It was then Duty raised her white hand. Out there she was not needed; here a place none but she could fill awaited.



It were infinitely better that a generation of children should benefit by her instructions, go into manhood and womanhood properly equipped to meet their duties, than that she in the rush of the busy world, should have her ears deafened to voices that now had a power to sting. Moreover, to win her victory here would give it a value, it should not have if won out there; and Lucy bade the tempter to be gone, and resumed her work as teacher in Stanton School. Afterward Jasper Long took up the thread of a friendship that had been so singularly snapped (if he had come to know why, he ever remained silent), and the kindly folk smiled and said some day there would be a new mistress in the old home in the valley. But Jasper spoke never a word of love, and Lucy, grateful for her blessing, gathered his tender friendship into her empty life. Still Jasper knew he was waiting, and sometimes when Lucy's old gay laugh filled his ears with its music, as they drove or walked together, he felt as if he had taken a step nearer to his destiny.

Thus the two years passed, and one morning Jasper Long, after a night of watching by the bedside of his suddenly stricken father, found himself

master of his life and his inheritance. He was young, and in the leisure that had been his he had been developing by a course of reading his love for art; now he was free to give himself up to the one mistress who never proves unfaithful, albeit she never fulfills all the desires of her lovers. He put his affairs in order, made arrangements for his future as an art student; then he sought Lucy. The drive was along the way they had taken that Sunday, the memory of which was fixed forever in the mind of each.

A silence had hung for a long while between them; then he said:

"Do you remember, Lucy——"

"Yes," she interrupted, "I remember," knowing what his question was.

"My duty, as it stood then, no longer exists," he continued. "I am now free to live out the life I was ready to prepare for my son. I shall start in a very short time for Paris to enter a school of drawing."

"I am glad—so glad," she said, although she felt her heart sink like lead, thinking of herself. A slight pressure on the reins stopped the horse in its unguided walk.

“Lucy, will you come with me?”

She turned her surprised face toward him. In the gloom of the evening and the trees, it showed like a cameo, and thrilled his artistic soul with its exquisite beauty. He took her little hands.

“Come with me, Lucy, as my dear wife,” he whispered, and as he drew her toward him, she felt all her being yielding to the request. By one of those un pitying flashlights of consciousness, she saw her life as it was, in all its toil, its dullness and its loneliness; then, as swiftly was unrolled before her the life that might be hers, as the wife of Jasper Long, rich art student, successful artist.

“I owe you so much, Lucy, as my friend; as my wife, you shall be the inspiration of my life, of my work. I shall fill your life as fully as I may; my supreme object should be your happiness. O, Lucy, even now, if you bid me give up the career I have mapped out, I should do so. Lucy! Lucy!” he cried, and now his face was close to hers, “what passed over your life passed over mine! We can belong to each other by sorrow as well as by love.”

She felt herself being drawn into his life, even as her body was being drawn closer to his breast; then the spirit of that other hour they had driven

down that way, brushed its wings against this, and with it came the prophetic knowledge of the hollowness of their union that had then been allowed her. A marriage of their bodies and an eternal separation of their souls? The thought set her back in her own place. She withdrew herself from his clasp.

"No, Jasper, that cannot—cannot be!" she said.

"You do not understand, Lucy," he said, his hands following hers. "I ask for nothing you cannot give! I only ask for your companionship—only the privilege to be yours—I and all I possess, all that may come to me. And I cannot leave you!"

Again she hesitated, for her time without him rose before her.

"I do understand," she said, however; "and still I say I cannot go. But you must. Now turn the horse and let us go home."

He gathered up the reins, and Lucy, looking from his face to the sky, saw a great luminous star melting through the fading light of the western sky.

"Look, Jasper!" she cried, pointing to the star; but he did not follow her direction, and instead caught her white hand and pressed it to his lips.

Other years passed. The children who had come to Lucy clutching their primers in their chubby

hands, were now in the advanced classes. Her family and the community had accepted the fact that she would follow her bent until old age should incapacitate her; and, if the former grieved in silence over her wilfulness, and regretted their one interference with her will, the latter rejoiced that since such was to be her fate, they were blessed by her work.

As for Lucy herself, she had come at last into a little world of quiet happiness. She had conquered self, and standing on that vantage ground, she had found she was mistress of her destiny. She perceived that while nothing any more could harm her, the very world seemed bent to give her happiness. She was living in a realm of love and benediction, in her family, in the school and in the community. The song was now perpetually in her heart, the smile on her lips, and the sparkle of heart-gladness in her eyes.

“It was worth while, all that went before, to come into such a kingdom.” All day that thought had been with her. It was a tender April day, the last one of the school year; for Lucy had succeeded in having the term extended even beyond the time secured by Miss Cora. On the morrow the ex-

hibition was to take place, followed in the afternoon by a picnic in the wood across the creek. There had not been much study, for the final drilling of the children in their parts of the entertainment they had prepared for parents and friends, had taken up the greater portion of the day. Now, with noisy shouts and laughter they had left, taking their books and slates with them. Lucy's roll-book and lunch basket were on the desk, and as she stood surveying the room, ready for the great event of the morrow, a sudden wave of gratitude for the good that was allowed her, overswept her soul, and again she thought:

"It was worth while, all that went before, to come into such a kingdom."

Then she was aware that someone was standing in the doorway. She turned quickly, the clutch of alarm at her heart, and saw a man, tall, bearded, well-dressed, looking at her through the dusk that had descended upon the room.

"Lucy!"

There was only one voice on earth so to call that name, and knowing Arthur Stanton was the speaker the woman saw her world which she had just held to be all-desirable vanishing around her, while the

old wild, torturing love leaped into life, fighting blindly as it came.

He strode across the floor, and she knew he was coming to take her into his arms, crush his kisses upon her lips, knew he would do this thing, that she had no power within her to prevent it; and also knew that in so doing his hardly won manhood, her proudly held womanhood would be smirched, outraged, trampled upon.

“O Christ, save us!”

The prayer stopped him at the desk, and as he looked at her across it, she knew that she had wronged him.

“I am free to come to you, Lucy,” and the voice went to her in a wave of tenderness. “Were it not so—— Oh, Lil’l Miss! my Lil’l Miss!”

**THE END.**























